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## CANARY ISLAND ADVENTURE



# Canary Island Adventure

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A YOUNG FAMILY'S QUEST FOR THE  
SIMPLE LIFE

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By  
RICHARD WALTER

*Illustrated*



E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc.  
NEW YORK, 1956

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FIRST EDITION

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*This book is gratefully dedicated to*

*MY MOTHER*

*who understood the magnetism  
of faraway places and had  
elastic apron strings to match*





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*by* GREGORIO DE LEON SUAREZ, M.D.

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*from photographs by the author*

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## INTRODUCTION

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I HAVE been asked by other members of my family to write my true impression of these remarkable Americans, now that their adventure on our island is at an end. My words may be too few to do justice to the diverse facets of their personalities, and may seem prejudiced by affection, but even so I shall be as accurate and sincere as I can.

It is only natural that the Walters of our Angostura Valley would be somewhat different from the Walters of Haddonfield, New Jersey. To scout the world for a different attitude toward life, as distinct from a tourist's-eye view of the superficial sights, they threw overboard many prejudgments and unburdened themselves of much of the ritual of American living. They lived among us, quite stripped of the many material comforts and conveniences and diversions to which, I understand, most Americans are accustomed. It is significant that they accepted this life wearing not the crown of sacrifice nor the lorgnettes of curiosity, but the cap of inquiry and humility.

We came to realize that such adjustment is not easy, particularly when we learned how different from our own was the Walters' concept of life. Many things important to them have no part in our scheme, and other things which were of little consequence to them are to us very dear.

One important difference, for which we had been prepared by movies, novels and notorious statistics, did not materialize. Dick and Katie Walter are exceptionally close in their family life. As a couple they are fraternally united. It is not necessary for them to speak of this. To us, who know the signs so well, it

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is apparent in every act and gesture. The relationship between parents and children, however, is for us a new experience. Whereas our children grow as a group in the bosom of the family, Barry, Brian, Karen and Craig Walter grow as distinct individuals. And whereas we guide our children largely by example and tradition, Dick and Katie add to their example a deliberate effort to shape each child's social personality, without, it seems, interfering with the uncommon originality of each one's character.

Katie's cheery "adios" has become as familiar as guitar music to Angostura dwellers as she passes on her way to market or school or to visit a friend. She is active, attractive and overflows with warmth and sympathetic understanding. She makes an ideal match for her husband, who is a quiet man of gentle manners, earnest and stable yet full of kindness and facile with new ideas and observations. By any light, he is what we call "*una buena persona.*"

Both Katie and Dick have brightened our gatherings with their wonderful sense of humor. On every occasion which has joined us over a cup of fellowship I have found that whatever the subject at hand a joke or an anecdote told by either of them carries in addition to its entertainment and amusement a special flavor of charm and good taste. For if in Dick we have a weaver of words, we have also in him a musician or an artist when the moment calls for it. And he has in his wife a marvelous collaborator to recall every epoch of old times in song or story—gay ones for the happier moments of their lives, sorrowful or stirring ones intense with the pathos of war which was for both an authentic reality so closely lived.

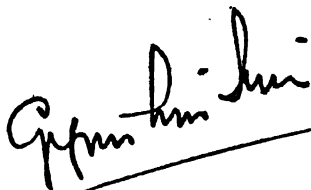
This American family has passed by our little Spanish homeland and captivated us. What can I say that would be free from the fondness and affection they have inspired in us?

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I like to recall the first time I saw them. We were in the summer house of our farm in the Angostura when they came in at about seven in the evening. We Canarios are generally conservative in regard to strangers, so in the polite phrases of first meeting we did not imagine that within thirty minutes Katie and Dick would be "as one" with us in an impromptu and authentic fiesta with its full measure of singing and laughing and storytelling. This polite phrasing, or shall we say "etiquette," which so often disturbs or postpones an honest meeting of minds, is interpreted by the Walters in a unique way. They use a form of greeting which combines courtesy and familiarity in a manner that encourages everyone to act as he is, not as he pretends to be. This takes an open, merry and sane disposition which can melt the ice and light the fire of amiable sincerity.

Though the Walters are young they are well acquainted with the values of life, and possessed of tremendous enthusiasm. An eagerness to know the world and its people without trying to make them over. A willingness to see wisdom in the beliefs and habits and attitudes of others. I see them in continuous contact with the reality of the moment, living for that moment without trying to exact from it more than it can reasonably offer.

We are proud to have people such as these for our friends. They have made a lasting impression on the lives of all of us and will always hold a place of honor in our memories.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Gregorio de Leon Suarez', written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above a horizontal line that extends across the width of the text block.

GREGORIO DE LEON SUAREZ, M.D.

*Las Palmas, Grand Canary*

*June 1, 1955*

*Translated from Spanish by Manuel Ley*





*Part I*

GETTING TRAPPED



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## Part I: GETTING TRAPPED

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WHEN Katie and I married in Rheims in May of 1945, we promised each other we'd never let living problems kill the sparkle of our champagne wedding. Nine anniversaries, four houses and four children later we took each other up on that promise and ran off for a change of pace in the Canary Islands.

The bright day we said our "I do's" to the mayor of the champagne capital, the future looked powerfully good. The Nazi brass had just signed the unconditional surrender in a schoolhouse a few blocks away. Both Katie and I had survived six campaigns and over eight hundred days in combat zones without a purple heart. We'd managed to save a few thousand dollars of army pay. We had a go-ahead from General Ike for our two war theater marriages—a legal one in France, whose laws were U.S.-approved, and a religious one in Germany, where our chaplain and friends were waiting. We were soon to honeymoon back along the still-exultant liberation route in a captured Ford V-8. Then it was just a matter of time and the point system before we'd be back in the wonderland of milk shakes and hamburgers, gadgets and friends and life-as-you-like it.

Katie, to my discomfort, labeled herself as the Bargain Bride. I had revealed the cost of the marriage license, with a groom's fumbling intuition, as an aisle-table special at 49¢, and she immediately tied this in with my prewar experience writing

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about bargains at Gimbels and Macy's department stores in New York. The cobwebby 1937 vintage champagne for my bachelor's dinner (attended by I-don't-know-how-many females) was only \$2 a bottle—even though the wily Monsieus Pommery had bosomed it in a sub-sub basement while lying themselves cross-eyed to Herr Goering's procurement agents. Two enormous bouquets came to less than a dollar. Transportation cost nothing at all, what with a hitchhike for the wedding party in bucket-seated cargo planes from Munich to Rheims and back.

This last episode, for one frightful moment, didn't seem like too much of a bargain. The rest of the party had discreetly gone off in another plane, leaving us newlyweds with an empty C-47 and a boy wonder who was his own copilot, navigator, radio operator and crew chief and perhaps due to make colonel before the month was up. When he came to the abandoned Heidelberg-to-Munich superhighway he thought he'd have some fun with us. He swooped down to power line level and proceeded to skim the highway at two hundred miles an hour. When he came to a bomb crater he artfully dodged it. Where a bridge was out he took the detour. Suddenly we banked around a mountain and came face-to-mouth with a tunnel. "He wouldn't!" shrieked Katie, throwing her arms around my big, strong, quivering frame. "He can't." I said, with my masterful studied casualness. He didn't, of course, but it was only the conscientious riveting or welding or strut-stringing of somebody's mother-in-law in Seattle or Los Angeles or somewhere that squeezed us up the face of that tunneled Bavarian mountain.

Our wayward paths had first passed at New York's Hotel Pierre more than three years before the wedding. Governor Dewey had just given our specially-formed evacuation hospital

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unit a rousing send-off to the coming army maneuvers in North Carolina, and the McLanes, the Dominicks, the Oyster Bay Roosevelts and other generous Roosevelt Hospital trustees had just treated us to a dinner the like of which we were not to taste for a long, long time. The music started up. Newly sworn-in officers, self-consciously proud in Saks Fifth Avenue uniforms began to dance with wives and nurses. Most of us, due to our modest ages and experience, were lieutenants. Those in their early thirties were captains. Still older men, known for their outstanding abilities in surgery, medicine or dentistry, were majors or lieutenant colonels. I don't know just what qualified me most for the posts of adjutant, historian, civil affairs and what-not officer. Perhaps my familiarity with writing, public relations and foreign languages. Perhaps my two years' reserve officer's training in the U.S. Navy. But I also had worked for some months in the psychopathic section of a county hospital, wrestling with manic-depressives and reasoning with paranoids. It may have been this experience more than any which convinced the authorities that I could grapple with army administration.

As the dancers whirled by my table I was deep in conversation with Mr. Gayer Dominick. Suddenly I saw her. Just a fleeting look, the twinkle of an eye, the sparkle of a round and friendly face, the lilt of a laugh that threw me three sentences behind the great man who was speaking to me. His eyes followed mine, he smiled gently and paused for a moment before going on. I think he knew something was about to happen.

It happened at a welcome dance at North Carolina's Rockingham Country Club. The nurses were getting a good rush, in which the oh-so-smooth boys from the cotton belt were making us Northerners look pretty stupid. Katie was radiant, and dancing with fantastic speed and agility. The cotton boys cut in

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on each other with merciless frequency, disappearing temporarily for rest and refreshment while the lady whirled on and on. I worked up a head of steam and charged in. "You must be exhausted. . ." I began. "Cut, please!" came a voice from somewhere. A few minutes later I tried again. Same fate. The third time I had my back up. "Got to have fresh air," I grunted, propelling her firmly and purposefully out of the glare and into the night. We walked out on the fairway and down to the water hazard. "Let's stick our feet in," she said, and we did. Talk flowed naturally, as if we had known each other all along. We walked barefoot around the green, letting the thick, luxuriant grass find its way between our toes. Then we heard one of those cotton voices hooting from the clubhouse veranda. Katie cocked an eye at me. "Massah's voice," she said, "the man who brought me." I fast-talked her into a couple of dances in a sand trap then surrendered her to the pack.

We saw little of each other in the next two months before we moved overseas. Katie was busy nursing the poison-ivy and snake-bite casualties from the stick war between the Blues and the Reds. I split my time between trying to streamline garrison paper work procedures to the realities of tent life in a cornfield, and keeping out of the way of an outspoken Texas master sergeant who knew ten times more about army regulations and wasn't going to let me forget it. We had one date in Jacksonville when the outfit was briefly staying at Camp Blanding, a few hours together on the troop train that took three days to get through Georgia, then at last the ten nights in silent, blackened convoy through the tense submarine lanes of the North Atlantic. We learned a lot about each other, standing by the rail on those bitter nights. Often alone, despite the 3000 passengers on a ship built for 500, and heavily overcoated and life-jacketed, we watched huge forms hulk out of the murk, change course

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and slip away to nothingness. We talked tirelessly of many things, two voices without visible source, and sometimes her infectious laugh would lift the shroud and make my worry seem very silly indeed. She sang songs, dozens of them, and all the way through. New war songs like *Bless 'Em All* and *I've Got a Sixpence* she learned almost instantly from the British ack-ack gunners on board and sang with such verve and gusto that it almost seemed fun to be going to war.

The mess sergeant who later baked goodies for our wedding reception, an astute Brooklynite named Paul Pearl, likes to tell how he was bamboozled on that boat. He was alone on night baking duty just a few hours out of New York, when on the door of the galley, deep in the bowels of the ship, he heard an urgent knocking. Turned out to be a GI he'd never seen before.

"Where are the sandwiches for the guards?" demanded the stranger.

"Nobody told me about any sandwiches for the guards," countered Pearl in the time-honored GI manner.

"Well f'crissake are you going let the poor guys starve out there on the cold deck all night!"

"But nobody . . ."

"Nobody—nobody. Just wait til *you* pull guard out there, crissake!"

As this is an ever-present possibility, if not probability, in every soldier's life, Pearl weakened. "How many guards are there?" he asked wearily.

"Twenty," said the stranger. "With two apiece, that's forty sandwiches every night. And no skimping on the meat or cheese or jam," he added, "make 'em *thick*!"

"Okay," said Pearl. He couldn't find the required sandwich materials among the troop rations, so had to borrow what he needed from the stores reserved for the Dutch crew. He worked

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feverishly taking only a few moments now and then to check on his ovens, and when he handed over the forty whopping sandwiches the stranger muttered and disappeared. Some officer goofed off on the job again, Pearl thought angrily to himself as he got back to his baking. Just like 'em to order twenty enlisted men out to the lousy deck all night without food! It gave him a feeling of satisfaction, however, to think that his efforts would mean so much to these twenty men on their many cold nights at sea.

After the tenth night and four hundredth sandwich delivered to the same surly stranger, Pearl was enjoying a morning smoke on deck when the colonel commanding troops stopped beside him.

"How's it going, Sergeant?" the colonel asked pleasantly.

Here's my chance, thought Pearl. "Well fine, Sir, but it takes a lot of time from my baking to make sandwiches for all those guards."

"What guards, Sergeant?" asked the colonel with a strange look. "There are no guards on this ship!"

Pearl's mind plunged into turmoil. He ran below to confirm the awful truth. Sure enough, the hungriest soldiers, or the ones who couldn't stomach the regular daytime fare, had been paying a dollar apiece for midnight sandwiches. But that was the day we debarked in Scotland, and in the confusion the wealthy stranger was never found.

It took a month at Oxford to equip and process the outfit for the North African invasion. This meant I was too busy and Katie not busy enough. We managed a week end in blitzed, blacked-out London, where I discovered Katie's hunger for new sights and sounds, and on the train we met the Scottish writer Sir Brian Fairfax-Lucy and his effervescent wife. They asked us to visit them in their Cotswold cottage. In the face of those



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early gas and travel restrictions, covering the thirty miles seemed quite out of the question. But I said we'd try, and I should have known better.

The following Sunday the executive officer asked me to make arrangements to pick up one of our men who was being discharged from a hospital about fifty miles away. The route lay right through our friends' village. I quickly made sure that none of our regular drivers felt like making the trip that rainy afternoon, picked up an overjoyed and imprisoned Katie, and off we went in the outfit's only jeep. For those few delicious hours of talking, reading and listening to records before the Fairfax-Lucys' log fire, we paid dearly. It was so late when we picked up our man that we had to drive all the way back in total blackout. A dread chore under the best of conditions, this was made triply hard by (1) wind and rain driving into our open jeep, (2) strange roads with no signs, (3) invasion-wary inhabitants who refused to give any directions or even tell us which road we were on or which town we were in. My admiration for British security was matched only by that for Katie's uncomplaining fortitude. The man in the back seat was pretty good about it, too. All he said was something about having to go back to the hospital again after all this.

We made it home somehow, but with our clothes drenched, our muscles paralyzed with cold and tension, and with our owl eyes flapping from their sockets. The motor sergeant was relieved to get back his only jeep. But the commanding officer confined me to quarters for three days for taking a vehicle without a driver, a rule that stuck until I got the honeymoon car three years later.

This much-abused jeep is now sitting on the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea, and the corporal who *should* have driven it for me had to swim for his life to Gibraltar, somewhere in

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the blackness behind our troopship. Had that torpedo been fired a few minutes earlier it might have struck us, instead of the vehicle carrier, and silenced some of America's most influential war correspondents. On our ship, the *Rangitiki*, were Ernie Pyle for *Scripps-Howard*, Merrill Muller for *Newsweek*, Will Lang for *Time* and *Life*, A. J. Liebling for the *New Yorker*, Gault MacGowan for the *New York Sun*, Ollie Stewart for the Baltimore *Afro-American*, Robert Neville for *Stars and Stripes* and others.

Ernie Pyle, bless his lovable hypochondriac soul, was overjoyed to find himself in the midst of forty of Manhattan's finest doctors—none of them with a thing to do. He promptly collapsed in his bunk and had a delicious time playing sick most of the way to Oran. I later took up his invitation to slog in from our muddy Tafaroui tent hospital and take a bath in his hotel bathtub, one of the few in Oran. Katie, a real favorite of Ernie's, was also asked. But she felt that bathing in the same bathtub I used might cause talk, so she used Joe Liebling's instead.

Ernie dropped in on us several times as we advanced with the front. He asked me to proofread and fact-check a column he'd written about medical care. Katie told him that when she tried to wash her feet in her steel helmet she was chagrined to find her feet were bigger than her head. He mentioned this in one of his columns. And when the clipping came from home Katie and I saw our names printed together for the first time. It gave me a nice warm feeling, particularly since the competition for her time was growing pretty hot between me and the artillery and other war correspondents and the highly-paid, highly-anxious air corps. This item later appeared in Ernie's book *Here Is Your War*.

Another who staked my claim in print was Gault MacGowan. He brutally described Katie as a red-haired, freckle-

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faced ex-cheerleader who was now bringing cheer and a will to live to the first neuropsychiatric casualties of the U.S. forces. He wrote many more columns about the outfit's work and our courtship, and eventually got home to lecture about them. One of his lectures took him to Maplewood, New Jersey, where he told a few stories about Katie, never dreaming that her aunt and uncle were in the audience. When they identified themselves afterwards, Gault shook his head sadly. "Pity I didn't know," he said, "I could easily have devoted the entire lecture to *that* girl!"

It was after our almost disastrous retreat from Tunisia's Kasserine Pass when I realized how much Katie's welfare meant to me. We had been taking almost all of the casualties from the British First Army and the U.S. II Corps in the Faid-Gafsa-Feriana area, when on the afternoon of February 17, 1943, battered and burned U.S. tanks and halftracks began limping past us in inglorious retreat. Then the infantry dropped back and dug in machine guns all around us. We could hear the roar of the enemy offensive coming closer and closer through the pass as we evacuated every patient who could survive movement to a new unit in the rear. In the middle of the night we ourselves were ordered back. The fifty-three nurses went first, on the back of two 2½-ton trucks. "There go the dollies!" someone shouted, and as the groaning engines and the rattling tail gate chains of the unlighted trucks faded into the mountains I returned to my foxhole with a keen sense of worry. Trucks came for the rest of us at noon on the following day. The enemy had air superiority and was exploiting it by shooting up the road into Tébessa, the key town to our rear. No one knew if the girls had made it back safely. Or if they had, where they would be. No one even knew if Tébessa was to be defended. Our sixty-truck convoy somehow escaped notice, and a few

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miles to the rear of Tébéssa we quickly picked another hog wallow in which to float our tents.

Katie was still in coveralls, combat boots and steel helmet, when I found her some miles away. But not even in a Lord & Taylor evening gown has she ever looked so good to me.

"Well!" she scolded, tipping back her helmet sunbonnet-fashion, "I was about to write you through the International Red Cross."

After our next retreat to Souk Ahras I grabbed the first free hours from our hectic rat-race, walked her to a hilltop in some pinewoods and asked her to be my wife.

We didn't tell anyone at first. Not until the victories of both Tunisia and Sicily were won. Katie threw an open-air announcement party on a dusty steppe and to our surprise no one was surprised. She showed off her pro-tem austerity ring—Arab soft silver, inscribed with mysterious passages from the Koran. Six months later this was replaced by the Rommel Diamond, a stone with a story stretching back several thousand years.

The Rommel Diamond would never raise eyebrows at Tiffany's. Nor would it be cast in more than supporting rôle at the opening of the Metropolitan Opera. But to me, and to *New York Sun* correspondent Gault MacGowan, it was a star of the first magnitude. I found it in a bazaar in Cairo, between bombers on a round-trip hitchhike from Sicily. An Egyptian friend of long standing took me to see a jeweler who specialized in buying heirlooms from estates. So the story went, and I'm not interested in disproving it, that this blue-white stone was discovered in the tomb of one of the ancient queens of Luxor and became the property of an Egyptian pasha who sent it to Antwerp for recutting in the improved, modern manner. The jeweler bought it from the pasha's estate and was willing to turn it over to me

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at a figure which was fair but which far exceeded my ready cash. Moreover, it was evening and I had to fly to Malta at dawn the following morning. It was a beautiful stone. I wanted so badly for Katie to have it that I could almost taste it. Then I thought of Gault, then hammering out dispatches from a room in the old Shepherd's Hotel right there in Cairo.

We ordered a gin fizz out on the open porch, and while crowds of dark Egyptians and pale colonials milled by in the soft evening air I told the story of the diamond.

"This is what war correspondents are for," said Gault, and forthwith he pulled a crumpled blank check from his khaki shirt pocket and wrote it out for the sum I lacked, drawn on a Cairo bank where he knew he had insufficient funds to cover it.

He raised his glass. "Let's call it the Rommel Diamond," he toasted, "for the German general who might have owned it, had he taken Cairo, and who would certainly have separated you and Katie if he'd won out in Tunisia." We then toasted Lady Luck, asking that Gault's overdue *Sun* salary check would beat my jeweler to the bank. Miraculously, it did.

Gault was later captured by the enemy in Normandy and released just in time to join us for a pre-wedding party in Germany. "This diamond," he pronounced with his unfailing flair for the dramatic, "is a symbol of love, good luck and changing times. From Luxor queen to Egyptian pasha. From the entrepreneur of the bazaar to a freckle-faced American cheer leader. This is the course of history!"

While the fortunes of war were still contrary in Tunisia we began to plot a postwar trip, a good long leisurely ramble through half a dozen European countries. We daydreamed about living in a villa on the Riviera or on a subtropical island somewhere, free from the dangers and restrictions and tensions

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of war and warmed by the friendship and serenity of people who knew how to live. We pooled the pay we'd been saving since the North African landing, and Katie, with the frontierswoman's instinct for hiding money in the kitchen range, tucked this or that amount into envelopes marked "Italy" or "Spain" or whatever.

This squirrelish instinct is usually a good introduction to a masked man. But in February 1943, shortly after Mr. Roosevelt and the Former Naval Person met in Casablanca, it turned to our advantage. I had just paid off the entire outfit for two months in Algerian francs, recovered most of it for transmittal in dollars to the U.S. and stuck the whole wad—about \$70,000's worth of the cabbagey notes—in the outfit's safe. A fresh rush of casualties, with everybody including officers carrying litters, and our vehicles going day and night to supply food and water and medical stocks, prevented me from delivering the \$70,000 to Corp's Headquarters for conversion to dollars. Two-three-four more days passed. Each night, after collapsing exhausted into the blankets, I shuddered nervously to think what would happen if all that cash entrusted to me were stolen. On the sixth day I finally got to the Corps finance tent.

The captain looked wide-eyed as I dumped huge clumps of bank notes on his field desk. "What you been doing with all that?" he demanded.

"Sorry, Captain," I said, "I couldn't get away from the outfit. The Jerries have tied us in knots with new casualties."

"I think you are going to thank the Jerries," he murmured strangely as he began counting the money. "How much you got here?"

"Five million two hundred fifty thousand francs," I said. "Seventy thousand dollars."

"No—not seventy thousand," he said without looking up,

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"one-hundred-five thousand. Roosevelt and Churchill increased the value of the franc by 50 per cent, effective at midnight last night. Lieutenant, either you had a pipeline to Casablanca or you got horseshoes around your neck. By bringing this currency today, instead of yesterday or last week, you've picked up a profit of thirty-five thousand dollars."

With our "kitchen range" hoard, Katie's and my share of this windfall was over \$500.

Currency brought other laughs and heartaches as we followed the Jerries up through Sicily, Italy, France and Germany. One heartache concerned the "worthless" Bank of France notes, printed on French machines by the Germans to pay their troops. After the fall of Tunisia, we had both German patients and German workers in our hospital. They knew they'd be sent to prison camps in America and that their enemy-printed currency would be worthless so in payment for small favors they gave it away wholesale to our GI's. These men, in turn, reportedly participated with this money in games of chance and asked me to convert their winnings to dollars to send home.

"Sorry," I had to say, "General Eisenhower has declared Bank of France notes worthless."

Months went by. The currency changed hands again and again. After a party in Sicily the big holders finally decided to rid their luggage of it for good. They built a huge bonfire and with hoarse shouts of delight hurled into the flames handful after handful of the worthless notes.

"Here goes ten thousand!" called a sergeant.

"Raise you twenty!" called Corporal Berinato, who had amassed 400,000 francs. And thus every last note went up in flames.

Ten months later we invaded Southern France, and one of

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the first directives to reach us in this newly-liberated land declared all Bank of France notes legal at fifty francs to the dollar.

I broke the news first to Berinato. He took it like a soldier, staring at me in stunned disbelief, his poker face hardly twitching. I left him, and returning later saw him still riveted to the spot.

The approach of V-E Day was not recognized by the stubborn enemy. Our ward tents continued to be filled with wounded Germans, as well as Russians and GI's who were dying from a drink of guided missile fuel. Our camp had been buzzed twenty-six of April's thirty nights by a lone Luftwaffe plane we called Bedcheck Charlie. In the last raid of the war four of us were sitting in the semiblackness of Katie's wall tent when we heard the pulsating thrum of Bedcheck's plane coming low over the rear of the camp. We lunged from the tent just in time to see an American truck convoy headed for the front with all lights ablaze. It was a clay pigeon setup for Bedcheck. "Douse your lights!" someone shouted with that futile impulse you get at a horror movie. The trucks groaned on. Bedcheck's guns chattered. Tracers streaked across our tent tops and swept the convoy from end to end. Two trucks caught fire, and in the flare of an exploding gas tank we could see the grotesquely twisted silhouettes of men about to leap. "Oh no!" murmured Katie, "a truckload of men!" Bedcheck circled once more, pumped some more tracers into the trucks, some of which had now zigzagged driverless off the road or into each other, and then he was gone. Our receiving teams were already on the job when I arrived, separating the dead from the living. Some were replacements straight from home, heading for the front that no longer needed them.



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A few days later we were married, and the world took on a brighter glow.

Many years before meeting me, Katie had promised herself a white wedding. So with confidence in ultimate Allied victory (and in me) she wrote home for a wedding gown and bridesmaid's gown even before the war was won. She and tentmate Ayrol Decker measured each other with a steel tape, the kind used to stake out camp sites and measure lumber for latrine boxes, then mailed home a list of figures and do's and don'ts. Back through the chain of APO's came the dresses. Katie's in ivory satin with a sweetheart neck. Ayrol's in aqua nylon net with a draped jersey top. Both had short trains. The girls tried them on and found they fitted perfectly. Ayrol was so excited about the feminine-feel of hers that it took some stern persuasion to get her back to coveralls and her two tentfulls of patients. Somehow the two gowns survived mud and dust and hurried trucking until victory brought them into their own.

This frippery, of course, was for our *second* wedding. Not the legal ceremony in Rheims, but the religious one in Landsberg, Germany. "And," said Ayrol looking me straight in the eye, "that's the one that *counts*."

We found a dandy little vine-covered church on the River Lech, just a gunshot from the prison where Hitler wrote *Mein Kampf*. The Lutheran rector agreed to let our Episcopal chaplain conduct services. One of our noncoms found he could make the organ speak our language. Some Quartermaster candles were trundled out to make up for lack of electricity. A colonel from Seventh Army Intelligence promised to furnish flowers. Another, from Ordnance, would bring the captured honeymoon car. A little old printer on a little crooked street found enough austerity paper to print announcements to be

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sent to the States. Our Colonel, Katie's pro-tem father for three years, agreed to give the bride away.

At his reception a bridegroom usually has nothing to do but shake hands, eat and get away as fast as possible. But as the current mess officer, I was smack in the middle. We had moved from tents into the bomb-damaged buildings of an air base, but we still had to use our field cooking equipment. Naturally there was nothing to buy from German stores. The GI ration had its ups and downs, sometimes predictable a few days ahead but always subject to last minute substitutions. My crew was drawing rations every day for a mob of 1400, so we couldn't expect to rate any special favors at the ration dump (like getting the leftovers of yesterday's "good ration" in place of today's "bad"). But there was one bright spot. I had hired the former chef of Munich's Hotel Munchener Hof to stimulate our GI cooks whose imaginations had been jaded by day after day after day of powdered eggs and canned stew. He was working miracles, and when I broke the news about a wedding reception for 200 he all but went into a trance. "Some tricks I learned at the Continental in Paris," he promised with a great light in his eyes, "just you wait and see!"

The kitchen came alive. Little men I'd never seen before began showing up at the back door with sprigs of this and mysterious bags of that. Three days before the reception the chef came to me with a broad smile. "I've found a beautiful pig!" he exclaimed. "All you must do is trade for it the black bicycle that one of your soldiers stole from the Russian who stole it from a German who is now dead!"

It sounded easy, and I never saw a man so eager to gyp his countrymen out of precious meat, but I knew it was wrong. The little pig stayed home, the black bicycle was returned to the family of its rightful owner, and what do you suppose we

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got in our wedding day ration? A new shipment of succulent American HAM!

From then on everything went smoothly. The powdered egg, wedding cake had some real egg meringues clinging to its side like great white snails. The punch was K-ration lemon powder mixed with the syrup drained from canned peaches and various other mysterious ingredients. The Luftwaffe's huge mess tables were marched to the wall and loaded with miles of hors d'oeuvres. Candlesticks were plasma cans. Streamers were roller bandages. Bells, cut from packing boxes, were sprinkled gaily with crystals of copper sulfate.

Outside the sun shone brightly as friends of many campaigns arrived in trucks, jeeps, command cars, cars still bearing their old Wehrmacht markings, even a recaptured British ambulance. The Colonel took Katie to the church in a captured Mercedes which whimpered so alarmingly that he asked two majors to tail him in a jeep. After the ceremony, when the long serpentine of tooting vehicles crossed the new bridge and snaked up through the gingerbread village of Landsberg, I looked first at the prison where Hitler started the Big Trouble, then at the grinning faces of the Bavarians crowded along our route, and last and longest at my radiant ivory-satin bride and decided that maybe a wedding was a pretty good thing after all.

Our honeymoon orders from General Patch's headquarters authorized us to proceed to London via Paris for one week plus travel time. "Travel time" is a pleasantly vague bit of governmentese. We could have flown to London in a few hours, but our way took five days. Private First Class Joe Comito had guarded our getaway car from can-tiers, wire-crossers, and other amateur demolition crews, and had its chrome, its cream paint job and blue leather upholstery glistening like new. Its V-8 engine had been returned, and we had four extra jerricans

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full of gas in the trunk. Jim Heroy had arranged with a Memmingen housewife whose husband was in one of our prison camps to put us up the first night. The second we spent in the tiny principality of Liechtenstein. This amazing little nation of twelve thousand people, nestling in the Alps between Switzerland and Austria, managed to stay neutral throughout the war. I had met a member of its ruling family, Prince Emmanuel Liechtenstein, on a bicycle junket through Europe in 1937, had corresponded with him until war closed the doors and now was anxious to have news from him. Besides, we were eager to see what a neutral country looked like. Trouble was, to get there we had to cross the French occupation zone. The French soldiers guarding the road to Austria were clearly puzzled when we asked them to let us through. As a deliberate bit of nonsense, we'd decided to approach this road block with Katie driving and me in the right-hand corner of the back seat. Now you have to be pretty important to have a lady officer driving you around. It was well known that General Ike's driver was a lady officer. Besides, the Frenchmen may have reasoned, you'd have to *feel* pretty important to sit so far from such a pretty one. They knew very well where *they'd* be sitting.

"Pass!" announced one of them with a flourish. The ponderous gate opened and we became guests of the French army.

Getting detached from the French was a little harder. The gambit we planned for the Liechtenstein frontier was to present ourselves to the lone French sentry as a couple of newlyweds who wanted to honeymoon in a beautiful country untouched by the stench of war.

"After all," I said with an eloquent shrug toward the gutted towns of Austria and Germany, "you wouldn't expect a man to spend the first days with his bride in a place like *this*!"

The Frenchman agreed it was a grim prospect indeed, and

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began to raise the barricade. Then his face clouded. "But what of the Liechtenstein frontier police up the road?" he asked.

"If they won't let us through," I warned, "we'll come back and spend the night in your barracks!"

A mile up the road I braked the car to a stop at the frontier station, jumped out and asked the officer to get me the Royal Castle on the telephone. He dutifully complied, and while he awaited a ring the thought at last occurred to him to ask who I was, what uniform I was wearing and what I was doing there.

"I'll explain as soon as I talk to the Prince," I said. At that moment the Castle answered the phone and I asked for Prince Emmanuel.

"He's somewhere in Bohemia," said a voice, "we haven't heard from him in months. His brother is here, if you'd like to speak to him."

I hadn't met the brother, but he'd heard both Emmanuel and his mother speak of me. "By all means come right up—Mother will be delighted to see you and I have a thousand questions to ask. We haven't seen an American here in five years. No one from the Allied forces, in fact!"

"One of your very efficient frontier police is breathing down my neck," I said.

"Of course," he laughed, "let me speak to him."

So that's how Katie and I became the first troops—Axis or Allied—to enter the sacred neutral portals of lovely little Liechtenstein. As we speeded up the smooth concrete road, with evergreen forests and snow-tipped Alps on either side, and first sighted the fairy-tale castle looming high on a hill above the capital, it seemed as if we'd dropped into The Land of Oz. Entering the castle was even better. We crossed a drawbridge, squeezed under a guillotine-like door and drove up a precipitous, spiral, cobbled drive to the inner courtyard. The Prince

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and a friend had a pitcher of cold dry martinis ready for us in a paneled den in one of the turrets. More people joined us, and for the next five hours or so—right on through a very un-GI steak dinner—we told our side of the war to these news-starved people who had been isolated by German conquests and whose only contact with our world had been through the oft-jammed broadcasts of the BBC.

"Every bed in the castle is occupied by relatives," explained the Prince, "and all but one room in our hotel, but I've arranged for you to have that. I'm afraid, though, that you'll meet with the same tiresome cross-questioning that you got from us. They've been cooped up together so long they've begun to get on each other's nerves."

There at the Wald Hotel in Vaduz many of Europe's non-ruling nobility had found sanctuary from their traditional enemy, Bolshevism. Poles, Russians, Hungarians and Austrians are some I remember. Their fear of the uncivilized, anti-monarchical Russian monster knew no limits.

"Your General Patton could take Moscow in a fortnight," said someone.

"Perhaps he could," I agreed, "but I don't think the American public would stand for it."

We might have stayed out the entire honeymoon in this Alpine Shangri-La, had Count Andrassy not revealed that a Hungarian friend of mine had been driven from his farm by the Russians and was in trouble in Constance. In this German-Swiss border town, after a few hours' drive through the French zone, we found my friend thin, drawn and discouraged in a German boarding house. We identified him to both French and Swiss authorities to aid his entry into Switzerland, shared some of our GI rations, then drove on to London via the Black Forest, Vosges Mountains, Paris and Dieppe. We paid another (more

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relaxed) visit to the Fairfax-Lucys' Cotswold cottage, and returned to Landsberg through Luxemburg and Heidelberg and that superhighway we'd flown a few weeks earlier.

Finding a place to sleep was a problem. Hotels and guest houses were closed. Civilians were still occupied with staying alive and rooting out collaborators. Military people were resting up after the big ordeal and wondering when they'd get home. One of these was a GI sergeant left in charge of a supply dump in northern France. He was dumbfounded to be faced—in the midst of the wreckage of the Ardennes—with a couple on a honeymoon.

"I've a ten-room villa you can take over," he said. "Got three servants and big oil paintings and everything—it's all yours."

"That's swell of you, Sergeant," I said, "but what about you?"

"Don't worry 'bout me," he said quickly, flashing violent eye signals, "I've got another little place down the street."

As soon as he was out of earshot, Katie turned on me indignantly. "Do you feel right about contributing to the delinquency of a noncommissioned officer!"

The gentle reader may divine the nature of my reply.

Our first home was the unbombed end of a bombed barracks at the Landsberg airdrome. We shared it with a fellow officer and his French bride, and later with another couple. The bomb had sliced the three-story building crossways, severing our hall right next to the bedroom. We often joked about sleepwalking into oblivion. Across the hall was a six-john, four-shower, eighteen-washbowl bathroom. Obviously intended for about 200 Bedcheck Charlies, not three married couples, it had no doors anywhere. Agreed-upon signals were 1. uninterrupted singing in the shower, 2. uninterrupted whistling when otherwise occupied.

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Katie whipped our apartment into shape in a jiffy. With a huge chiffonier, she blocked an inside doorway that led into thin air. With maps and charts, she covered holes in the plaster. With shoe polish, she gave a homey luster to the odd pieces of scarred furniture. With ration boxes, she made night stands and end tables. With plasma cans, she fashioned lamp shades, ash trays, flowers vases and toothbrush holders.

Just as we were growing fond of the place, the outfit moved south to set up shop in an ex-antiaircraft school in Schongau. There we shared a five-room apartment with one of the other couples, enjoyed a sweeping view of the Bavarian Alps and took occasional junkets to sights like Berchtesgaden, Oberammergau, Munich and the Mad Ludwig's wondrous castle of Neuschwanstein. We skied near the top of the towering Zugspitze, took in the Salzburg Music Festival, even bought a folding sailboat and sailed the Ammersee.

It was a great summer, with work and play nicely balanced, and we thought if this was a sample of married life we'd take two. News of the Japanese surrender came to us over the crude box radio I'd concocted for Katie's birthday, and assured us at last that we wouldn't be split up and shipped to the Pacific. Radio Munich sent an announcer on a round of victory celebrations to pick up interviews with a portable mike, and we lay awake until 3 A.M. listening to GI replies to the brilliant question: "What does Victory mean to you?" It was like asking children, "Why do you like candy?" Most answers were a verbatim, "It means we can go home." But the guy we lay awake all that time to hear was the one who shattered both the interviewer and the question with, "What dosh Vitry mean to me? It meansh PEESH, PEESH, ETERNAL PEESH . . . AND CONQUESHT OF THE AGGRESHOR!"

Our next home was a farmhouse at the end of the Philadel-



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phia Main Line. January, 1946, was a brutal time to set up housekeeping, what with waiting lists for things not yet available in the stores, practically no wedding gifts, and parents living too far away to effect hand-me-downs. The Land of Plenty was fresh-out of plenty, and we began to realize that people had more money than roses. The farmhouse was bare as a barn in springtime. It hadn't been lived in, except by chickens, for a long time, and there were dozens of hidden catastrophes just waiting to happen. We didn't realize it then, but from the moment we told the landlady, "We'll take it," we became charter members in the Do-it-yourself Cult which had yet to be recognized by the hardware dealers and yet to be named by America's glad-eyed shelter magazines.

Even so, as we stood there in the frozen tundra, looking in at the upright orange crates we had for tables and thinking of the coal-eating furnace and pot stove defying us to start them, we felt like boobs for catching point system fever and bolting for home like umpteen million other homesick warriors. The occupation army and UNRRA and foreign state department posts looked like cream puff stuff compared to the home-front battle that lay before us.

But my new job, with a peach of a boss and the finest agency in the advertising business, was too good to pass up. Barry, our first-born, was due to arrive in June. To turn back now would be chicken. We were dedicated to the struggle.

First there was the matter of a car. This farmhouse was four miles from the nearest obstetrician and shopping center, seven miles from the station where I would catch the train to work and twenty-six miles from city fun and friends. Luckily I had an uncle who vouched for me to an honest dealer who put us on his list for the new car we received thirteen months later. For the time being he would sell us a 1936 Pontiac which he

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would overhaul before delivery and while overhauling it he would let us drive a 1941 Nash. This promise backfired on him when the General Motors strike blocked his flow of Pontiac parts for two months, but he stuck to it, and refused to be reimbursed for 3000 miles' wear-and-tear on his Nash.

Our faith in our countrymen got a further boost from an elderly Philadelphia electrical supply dealer appropriately named Mr. Just. We came across Mr. Just during a frustrating refrigerator search through department stores and appliance shops. His side-street shop looked barely able to support the floor sample, but there it was: a gleaming new seven-foot GE with drawers and trays in all the right places. As we fondled and drooled, thinking more and more how impossible it would be to live without this great necessity of modern civilization, a gentle voice came from the back of the store.

"Would you like to get on the list for it, son?"

"How many names?" I asked wearily.

"One hundred twenty-six," said the man, holding up a sheaf of papers, "you would be one-twenty-seven."

We mentally divided this by Mr. Just's probable factory quota, and Katie broke into peals of laughter. "Just in time for Child Number Three!" she stage-whispered to me.

"Thanks just the same," I said, starting for the door, "we have an empty farmhouse staring us in the face. Looks like our only hope is a quiz program, or a rattling good raffle."

"Wait a minute, son," he said, rising with difficulty from his chair and moving toward us. "Nobody on this list has twelve overseas stripes." We were still in uniform and his eyes appraised us carefully but warmly. "You can count this as your first piece of furniture. Tell me how to find your farmhouse and you'll have ice cubes by supertime tomorrow."

In a daze I gave him a check for the OPS ceiling price. He

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waved us good luck and started back to his desk and it was not until then I noticed he had a limp.

Nor did kindness end there. Friends in New Jersey sent us some of their sugar ration. A friend on the West Coast expressed us twenty pounds of butter in dry ice. Another sent Katie two dandy maternity dresses. Still another gave her tips on canning and freezing fruits and vegetables and we plunged into big-scale gardening to make this new knowledge pay off.

One purchase followed another. Furniture, carpets, curtains and pressure cookers. Tools, theater tickets and fertilizer. Paint, sandpaper, club memberships and shelf lumber. Flower seeds, coal, week-end guests and a lawn mower. Then deep into research for the right-size screws, the right kind of cucumber seeds, the right spices for the cupboard, the right gadgets and duds for the baby-to-be.

Eight days after Barry was due I got home from the office to find Katie sitting by her packed suitcase.

"You mean. . .?"

"Yes—soon."

This was the understatement of the year. I had just time to get her to the hospital, fill out all the forms and get to the bottom of page one of *The Tempest* when the doctor came out to say that we had a son. "Mother's fine," he added, "but she's a stubborn young lady. Wouldn't let me give her a drop of anesthesia."

Our next eight years passed like hopped-up montages in a newsreel. Brian came the following summer, Karen the one after that, and Craig just two after that, giving us four within four years of one another. To say that this was *exactly* according to plan would be toying with the truth. But we had agreed way back in North Africa that we'd like a large family, and that we'd like the children enough of an age that they'd play

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and grow as a group. This sort of fun had been absent from our own lives. Katie's brother was nine years younger than she, mine five, when we'd lived in separate worlds through the rugged individualism of our parents' generation. So what now was actually lurking in the wishing wells of our minds was a yearning for the family of grandmother's and grandfather's day. The circle of bright little faces around the groaning festive board. The sharing of the day's experiences. The standing jokes. The tinkle of natural laughter. How satisfying to watch their minds and bodies grow day by day! How deeply rewarding one's relaxation at day's end.

But grandfather had the edge on us in several ways. He had *his* grandfather out whittling in the woodshed, entertaining a couple of the small fry while dinner was cooking. And maybe there was Aunt Susan, who'd never married, supervising the weekly bath detail and clothes-changing department. And somebody who was a whiz at hemming curtains, baking pies, polishing furniture, putting up fruit, darning sox, patching pants, answering the doorbells and blowing noses. So his wife, if she was any kind of organizer at all, reached the end of the week relatively sane and contented and fulfilled. She didn't try to be all things to all people, nor did he. She had her work and sphere of influence; he had his; and they weren't constantly trying to mastermind each other's. Yet, through the family, their world was one.

We didn't kid ourselves that we could bring back the past, but our route to a modern-day version of this good life proved about as navigable as a bombed airstrip. The farm had just enough of everything to make it a problem but not enough to make it self-sufficient. There was no grandfather to whittle, no Aunt Susan to bathe the kids, no farmhands glad for a place to live, no *anybody* to do the million-and-one other things that

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kept popping up. Just Katie, a city girl at heart, and I such as I was before and after commuting trains and before and after week-end guests. The country stores didn't have some of the things we felt desirable for living, so Katie was often calling me on our eight-party line to please pick up this or that in Philadelphia. One cold day she called to say the bottom of the furnace had rusted or corroded or crystallized and dropped into the ash pit, and would I bring home a new one.

The landlady's livestock turned life into a Walt Disney cartoon. Roosters woke us in the morning. Turkeys woke the baby at night by gobbling every time someone came up the road. Sheep broke out of their pasture and grazed on our iris and marigolds. Every now and then an errant porker got loose and wallowed in the garden or nudged the baby carriage.

Often during the two-year spell on the farm our thrifty landlady called on us to help with chores like bringing in the hay, penning a pig or pushing a car. But the one that put Katie's urban-to-rural acclimatization to the test was the time she was expecting Brian within a month and was asked to be midwife to a ewe. The landlady's brother, who had received his farming experience in the merchant marine, usually looked after such things but he was gone for the day. The landlady had put off calling the veterinarian throughout eight hours of labor, hoping the ewe would deliver by herself and save the vet's fee. But when the ewe began bleating like a fogbound freighter and groveling in acute distress her owner tried unsuccessfully to reach the vet, took fright and called on Katie for deliverance. "You're a nurse," said she with a Hippocratic stare, "please do something!" Katie insisted that her obstetrical training at New York's Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center had by-passed the sheep world but she was moved by the urgent bleating of the ewe and by the distress of the landlady. Low-price rentals

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were still scarce in 1947. She pulled supper off the stove (no small sacrifice for a newlywed), donned her rubber dishwashing gloves with the aplomb of a Walter Mitty and sallied forth across the fields with the divine inspiration of a Nightingale. But sacrifice and aplomb and inspiration were not enough to deliver the lamb. It was already dead, with wrongly-positioned forefeet barring proper presentation. Katie braced and tugged, withstood withering looks from the reproachful ewe, thought empathetically of her own ordeal so soon to come, finally admitted defeat. It was a cowhand from a neighboring farm who calmly slipped a lasso round the lamb and extracted it like a baby tooth.

Already we could see that something must be done to ease the pressures of living. The answer was a unique arrangement with Bob and Yvonne Behrens. They were a witty and likeable couple who worked for the same company I did and wanted to save money to go study in Europe. As Katie was sick of being stuck on fifty acres with nothing but turkeys, pigs, sheep and a view, and as our growing family could well stand a larger house, we plunged in and bought an old thirteen-room town house on three-quarters of an acre in Collingswood, New Jersey. It was handy to the office where Bob, Yvonne and I worked, so "Why don't we all live together and share work and expense?" we asked each other over a bottle of beer one night.

It was a bully idea. They took over two upstairs rooms, made one into a living room, shared our bathroom, dining room and kitchen. It was one couple's job to market, prepare and serve the food for all four of us, and to clean up the kitchen afterwards. The other couple tidied the rest of the shared rooms and the yard, and was not to set foot in the kitchen until the following week when chores were reversed. Each couple was to spend no more and no less than twenty dollars a week for all food

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purchases. This led to some red-hot competition between the two wives to see who could turn out the most sensational menu for the money.

"How'd you ever afford *this*?" we'd shout, as Yvonne set a thick sirloin before us.

"We're fresh out of butter for the rest of the week," she would answer. Or "Just don't ask for dessert, that's all."

Once Bob met a farmer friend who filled the back of his car with free rutabagas. It was Yvonne's week in the kitchen and she decided to save up for a big blowout. We found ourselves eating fried rutabagas for breakfast, boiled or broiled or sautéed rutabagas for dinner, rutabaga salad, rutabagas cunningly hidden in sauces, in mashed potatoes, in soup. Criticism of the cook was prohibited but toward the end of Rutabaga Week we began to greet each new brain child with a pollyannish "Oh good—rutabagas!" until at last came the great reward, a magnificent standing rib roast.

There were other chores we shared. One Sunday we borrowed a portable fire-fighting outfit and pumped twenty gallons of hot water onto the kitchen walls and ceiling. "The wallpaper peels right off," we'd heard someone say, so we figured we'd be dopes to pay a paper hanger fifty dollars for such a snap of a job. Well, you know the rest. There wasn't just one, there were *four* layers of paper on that wall, the first one having been petrified circa 1914. When the hot water seemed only to toughen the paper we switched to steam, piped through a sawed-off rubber hose from teakettle to wallpaper. In no time at all the kitchen looked like the storeroom of a sunken galleon, and we four like Laurel & Hardy and Abbott & Costello wrestling an octopus. Greasy, pasty water drooled down our necks. Gooney paper plopped into our faces. By nightfall we'd somehow scraped off every scrap and collapsed

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into bed thinking dark thoughts of our thirty-three years of predecessors who, perhaps with fiendish glee, had simply slapped one layer of paper atop another.

The move from the farm to Collingswood was another money-saving do-it-ourselves affair. We rented one of those Drive-Ur-Self trucks, 1½-ton size, borrowed a station wagon and went to work. Bob, thanks to his Army driver's license, drove the truck and everything looked rosy until he was rolling downgrade through Bryn Mawr and the brakes went on the fritz. He barreled by me with his horn blazing, ran two traffic lights and finally hand-braked to a stop in front of the firehouse.

"Think you're pretty smart, don'cha young fella!" called out one of the firehouse snipers as he worked a toothpick around his mouth.

There were a couple more close calls—one when we almost ran the nine-foot-high truck through an eight-foot-high tunnel, the other when we *did* run about 3 1/2 tons of truck and load over a 3-ton-limit wooden bridge, but we wound up safe, tired and triumphant and with a saving of \$110.

After Bob and Yvonne left for the Sorbonne, Katie and I had no time to grow lonesome. Karen, our third in three years, arrived to brighten and complicate the family circle. New friends sprouted, invariably in distant suburbs, and getting over to see them was an operation tantamount to the Normandy Beachhead. First, the logistics of diapers, formula, extra clothes, blankets, car seats, flashlight, jars of strained squash, bibs, towels, bassinet, favorite toys that can't be found just as you climb in the car. Next, the rear-guard activity—collecting kiddie cars and shovels and stuff from the sidewalk, locking all five outside doors, closing windows, checking stove and thermostat. Then there was the matter of outfitting and equipping *ourselves* for



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the few precious minutes of hand-to-hand engagement with our friends. On one such foray, after Katie and the children had been dispersed into his house, the host stood staring at the mountain of matériel left in our car.

"How many days," he asked dourly, "do you plan to stay with us?"

We soon decided we'd be smarter to stay home and maneuver others into coming to us. There was a long-unused 45-foot circular swimming pool in the yard, put in by Frank Orth, the Keith Circuit vaudeville star who'd had our house built. A pool contractor came over and estimated he could put it into working order for \$4000 to \$6000. So we decided to do it ourselves. Friends volunteered or were pressed into service for week-end work parties. Katie and I put in odd hours during the week, and eight months and \$400 later we were swimming and playing water polo in our own yard. Meanwhile I had become an overnight authority in the fields of hydrodynamics, plumbing, electricity, pumping machinery, waterproofing, masonry, bacteriology, ditch digging, fence erecting and water witching (it works Mr. Blandings . . . we got underground springs only fifteen feet down!). We even sleuthed clues like the discovery that you can precisely counteract the shrinkage of cement patches by mixing in a measured quantity of iron filings which expand as they rust. Does that sound like the bailiwick of an advertising man and a young suburban matron? We kept getting involved in so many activities like this that we had little time to *swim* in the pool.

After two swimming seasons and the birth of Craig—our Number 4—the company invited us to move to Detroit. It was a tug to sell the place, after we'd lavished so much of ours and our friends' labor on it, but we didn't relish the worries of a spare-time absentee landlord. Another big house for our noisy

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and growing family seemed essential so I leased a fifteen-room job on a 60 x 1200-foot lakefront property in Grosse Pointe. Katie was not on hand to demur at my choice of this 1899 monstrosity. It was lucky for the owner that she wasn't, for her first comment as I drove her through sagging gates toward the crumbling edifice was: "You're kidding—not this—this Charles Addams thing!"

I thought she'd fall in love with the place—its sleepy old charm, its five bathrooms, its odd rooms hidden beneath porches and staircases, its big sunroom off the kitchen where the kids could play with part-time supervision, the playhouse—once a root cellar—in the yard, the boathouse for parties down by the lake. But her reaction proved me an incurable romanticist. Her realistic eye appraised the darkness of the rooms built with a Victorian abhorrence of sunshine. She envisioned curtains shivering by the leaky winter windows. She saw that the living room would be gagged by our king-size sofa and that its walls would clash with our slip covers. She imagined five unflushed toilets scattered through four floors. She saw that the sink was a foot too low and ten feet too far from the refrigerator. She thought of awakening to the depressingly dark-stained woodwork upstairs. She saw the kids making a beeline for the lake (they did), throwing rocks at neighbor Ford's greenhouse (they didn't), and falling through the roof of the root cellar (only one did). Not all these pitfalls had escaped my attention, but my "after-six-and-on-week-ends" mind had certainly discounted them.

It turned out that the vacating tenant was another advertising man who had signed the lease without the concurrence of his wife.

After two years the company moved us back to Philadelphia. This time I asked Katie to go on ahead and find us a home, for

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keeps. She went straight to Haddonfield, New Jersey, a fine old community with a progressive outlook, and liked the first house she saw. Even after an all-night train ride she had a glint in her eye when she walked into my office Monday morning.

"First, tell me what's wrong with it?" I asked, suspicious of that glint.

She laughed, and I could tell she was uncommonly excited. "Well, it's absolutely alive with possibilities," she began.

I knew what that meant. "How many partitions to knock out?" I asked.

"Only one."

"How many rooms does that make?"

"That reduces it to, let's see, ten."

"How old is it?"

"The real estate man wasn't sure, but he thought it was built in about 1914."

"We can't seem to hurdle the First World War. How about paint?"

"Oh it needs paint inside and out. The wallpaper has to come off too."

"What about the kitchen?"

"Impossible. Just have to rip everything out and start all over again. But the way the doors and windows are arranged, it could be a perfect U-shape kitchen, with new sink and range, electric outlets, and things like that."

"What do you mean—'things like that'?"

"Well, the man says that it still has the original 1914 wiring which isn't heavy enough to run our appliances. We wouldn't want to use the old wires anyway—what with fixtures coming out of the corners of ceilings, ghastly curlicued frosty things sticking out of the walls, and all."

"How is the plumbing?"

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"Water pressure is a little low. Might need some new pipes. And the bathroom needs a new floor. In fact something will have to be done to all the floors—lots of splinters and big cracks. And the plaster needs some touching up, in fact the ceilings in three rooms are sagging and in the boys' room you can see right through the lath strips."

"The *boys'* room?"

"Yes, that's the one on the south corner, with the big wardrobe closets. We can have the one on the north, Karen and Craig the one with the big play closet."

"*That* sounds good."

"Yes, but . . ." she hid her face in her hands then peeked at me through her fingers, "but you should see the woodwork."

"All chipped up?"

"No, it's never been painted. It's that depressingly dark-stained wood. All through the house, too. We could bleach it or something."

"Hasn't anything been modernized? Who lived in this place, anyway?"

"A nice old lady in her eighties, real active in the DAR, and quite respected around town. But her father built the house for her, and she loved it so the way it was in 1914 that she wouldn't change anything. Now she's gone to a sanitarium."

"Which is where we should go if we buy this thing."

"Now don't you get into an uproar until you hear the good side! It's got the best floor plan I've ever seen—all rooms just where we want them. It's two blocks from the best school in town, four blocks from the train you'll take to work, five blocks from shopping. The children in the neighborhood look and sound nice. There's a big grassy back yard for playing, some big old shade trees for climbing, place for a vegetable garden and choice of *two* good spots for a garage."

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"You mean there's no garage!"

"No driveway either. The nice old lady never had a car. You'll be happy to hear that there's a good oil burner and a thousand-gallon tank and the man says if we insulate and put up storm windows we should be able to cut the amount of oil it uses in half."

"Oh, no storm sash." I had a vivid picture of myself teetering atop a tall stepladder when we added four of them to our Collingswood house. Now this house would need them all around. "Nuts to storm sash." I said, only half aloud.

"Might as well have them," Katie said with a wink, "the screens, for such windows as have them, are all moth-eaten, and we could get those combination ones."

"Look," I said, "couldn't you find anything you liked that was already fixed up? Something with somebody else's blood in it?"

"Not under thirty to forty thousand dollars. The man thinks we can get this for less than half of that. And when we're through we'll have everything just as we want it."

"We should have stayed in Europe."

The following week we bought the place. On the night of Settlement Day a dozen of the office force brought their wives over for a housewarming. One by one they walked through the dingy, echoing rooms, gingerly stepping over chunks of plaster, straining their eyes by the light of the 25-watt fixtures, groping blankly for something complimentary to say. One of the wives finally hit upon it.

"Well it certainly *is* nice and roomy!" she said happily.

In the two months between that night and our move we arranged for a covey of painters to scrape and paint the outside of the house, an electrician to quadruple our power supply and put in new wiring, a plumber to put in a new sink and wash-

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ing connections, a cabinetmaker to install new steel kitchen cabinets and counters and a plasterer to do \$200 worth of plastering. I suspected that a plasterer could almost spend the rest of his life in that house. "Do the big repairs first," I asked, "then work down to the little ones and when you've run through \$200 worth just pack up and go home."

All this work was to be finished well before our moving date. Each contractor was told what the other was to do and a man was put in charge of checking on them. Then we returned to Grosse Pointe, found a tired-footed man to take over our unexpired lease on the Charles Addams monster (without consulting his wife), engaged a moving company then set off to vacation at Cape Cod.

Everything was calculated down to a gnat's eyebrow. This was to be one of those moves you read about—fully professional, right to the making of the beds and turning down of the covers for our first night's sleep. But when we were halfway to Cape Cod a little voice prodded me to call the coordinator in Haddonfield to make sure the move was going according to plan.

"That nasty suspicious mind of yours!" hooted Katie, "leave those men alone—they know their jobs."

But I had to call.

"Oh Mr. Walter," shouted the coordinator, "am I glad to hear *your* voice! The mover is here with twelve and a half tons of household effects which he refuses to move into the house until the electrician closes up the holes in the floor he's made for the wiring. The electrician says he won't be finished with this for another week. The mover also insists that all the spilled plaster be cleaned up, and I can't reach the plasterer about that. The painters showed up today, for the first time, then left for another job when they saw the movers would be in their way. The plumber's ready to put in the sink but he's waiting on

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the cabinet man who hasn't been near the place and has no telephone."

"Looks as if we'll end up doing it ourselves," I sighed into the phone. "Do your best to have everyone meet me there at eight o'clock tonight. We'll get this rolling again somehow." And there went our vacation.

The rest of the project is briefed in this jingle we sent friends at Christmastime a year later:

It's been rumored around that we fell off the earth  
Or moved Eastward so far we fell into the surf.  
The truth of the matter—we're not *into*, we're *under*  
A pile of debris, and there's only one wonder  
That we're holding the count at the same sum of kids  
And Mommie and Daddy ain't quite blown their lids.  
The House—huge old wreck—we bought proudly certain  
We could work wonders with paint, plaster and curtain.  
The primary goal was: revise the old kitchen  
To work like a model of next year's edition.  
Up went a ceiling, out came a wall,  
In went a sink with cabinets and all.  
Off came the wallpaper, down went a floor,  
Stove-washer-dryer, there *can't* be much more!  
Except dishwasher, range hood, a maze of new pipes,  
Electrician QUICK—more juice for the lights!  
Each day we conferred with "professional" guys  
Who had no ideas and they all came too high.  
Study color charts, estimates, clippings and swatches.  
Pour tons of concrete while the neighborhood watches.  
Add breezeway and fire stops, rock wool and storm windows  
While seventeen small fry fly off of their spindles.  
Dick plasters with newspapers shielding the floor,  
While K. grinds her heel into Eva Gabor.  
Plow through old magazines culled from the shelf,

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Temporarily titled "Do it yourself" . . .  
See new tile floor jobs by gals crisp and trim  
One throws a sweet glance and murmurs "Oh, Jim—" "Only fourteen-fifty to do this whole room!"  
(What is it—the size of hummingbird's tomb?  
Or could we have missed a line in the copy?  
Or perish it . . . maybe we're natcherly sloppy!  
No goo on *her* pumps—no chairs on her bed—  
No clothes hung on doors—no rocks in her head.  
It's *our* budget that's blushing, our backs that are bent,  
What's more, our hair gets full of cement.)  
The stairway's all carpet with foam rubber under  
To soft pedal small feet to more moderate thunder.  
The woodwork we bleached—"pre-blight chestnut," folks say,  
"They just don't *build* houses like this today!"  
And now a report from the lollipop crowd:  
They're lively, fast-growing and awfully loud.  
Craig is just three and the thrill of our heart.  
He's handsome and loving and—well—kinda smart!  
Our blessing named Karen smothers with wiles  
Her Daddy who's giddily wreathed in smiles  
As she asks him so coyly, "When will you stay  
"Home from the office so I c'n kiss you all day?"  
Twinkle-eyed Brian looks lots like his Daddy  
But faster by far, this fleet-footed laddie.  
His love has been steadfast for over a year  
For sweet Mary Lee, who's in her sixth year.  
Now Barry, our first-born, heeds not love's rule,  
For he has three cuties escort him to school.  
The problem that keeps him all in a diddle  
Is how he'll be able to stay in the middle.  
Yes, our year's been plumb crazy with coming and going  
(And interminable readings of Gerald McBoing.)  
But with theater, skiing, sailing and spice,  
Somehow it's all turned out rather nice!



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The House is most finished, and we wait with good cheer  
The prospect of hearing from you-all next year.  
Stop by if you can—give us excuse for some ease—  
We promise you'll not have to prune any trees.  
To summarize briefly what someone else wrote:  
"Merry Christmas to all" and an end to this note.



*Part II*  
GETTING SPRUNG



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## Part II: GETTING SPRUNG

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WITH the most urgent jobs done, and the house organized on a limited-outside-help basis, we settled down to enjoy "the good life" in the American Way. Like many other family partnerships formed in or immediately after World War II we had never really colonized. Home—on the farm, in Collingswood and Grosse Pointe—was merely an extension of our nomadic army life, each with its own unsettling influence. Always there was this looking forward to something . . . the idea that things will be better after the war, or after we get home, or after there are plenty of things in the stores, or after controls are off, or after we finish the swimming pool, or after Korea, or after taxes come down, or after we get in our own house again, or after the children get bigger, or after a hundred other things any reader can add or substitute.

But what dismayed us more, no matter where we lived or traveled or vacationed, was finding so much restlessness and unhappiness in others—even folks who *were* settled down. Life, it seemed was one long string of complaints. A Suggestion Box that was never empty. Every morning I encountered worried faces on the station platform, while Katie met more on

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the sidewalk and in the A&P. And the complainers at cocktail parties—especially those with a Messerschmidt Twitch (Air Force term for a worried pilot who's always looking over his shoulder for someone)—don't get me started on them.

What was there to worry and complain about? The rubble that's still in the streets from the recent bombing? The plague that's taking a thousand lives a week? The nationwide bank failure? The smell from the concentration camp just over the hill? No—this:

"I've gone back three times to have that rattle taken out of the rear, but those . . ."

"They *promised* they'd deliver the drapes on Thursday, and I *told* them I had people coming on Friday, but . . ."

"Sure, he turned in a fair performance, but Walter Hampden did it better in 1924 . . ."

"So do you know what the stinkers gave me for a budget? . . ."

"It gets the plates and glasses clean, but half the time I have to do the knives and forks by hand. You'd think . . ."

"They've had this dug up for five days, and every time there's a car coming from the other direction I have to stop! . . ."

"It used to be a nice place to spend the summer, but now . . ."

Deliver these with a slight whine and you can be a success in any gathering. The worst of it is, it actually seems fashionable to take a dim view of everything. The woman who exclaims happily over many things is often considered a little soft in the head. The man who busts up and shakes your hand a little too warmly must have something to sell. When someone congratulates you on your promotion you're supposed to look surprised and perhaps a little annoyed. "Oh *that*," you shrug, "it doesn't mean a thing. Every time they don't feel like giving out a raise they make another VP."

Laughter is rationed, and so is optimism. Americans may not

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be the optimists the Europeans think we are. If we were more optimistic we wouldn't allow the federal government to go on raising the national debt. On laughter, I remember one day in a cafeteria when somebody told a joke and Katie burst into heartily appreciative laughter. The others at the table laughed too, but with only the usual three or four self-conscious smirks. One of them turned to Katie and said, "Look here—it wasn't *that* funny."

"The *Readers' Digest* makes me tired!" a dyspeptic man told me on the train one morning, "they've got a happy solution for everything."

Not quite, maybe, but good things happen every day, and *somebody* has to counteract all the dim-viewers. Why should some of my ex-classmates be growing gray and hard-looking at thirty-seven? I personally know eleven men with ulcers. One of my good friends got them at thirty-six, and when I probed to find what was bothering him all he could say was that life was too complicated. "Too many things to do." Equally important were the too many *people* he had to manipulate on each of these projects.

One of his projects is a small factory he inherited. His father's main problem was to improve his product, stream-line his means of making it, find ways to sell it against competition and keep from going broke. The son inherited these problems and has since picked up more along the way. Chief among these is the role of cajoler. Whereas his father used to be able to size up a situation, make a decision and give instructions, the son must call a meeting. He presents the problem to the group, asks for opinions and reactions, steers the discussion so that it won't hurt this or that person's feelings, calls in the union representative to get plant reaction, taps the accountants for effect on taxes and a lawyer or two to see where he transgresses on the far-reaching

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tentacles of federal, state and local government. He may even have to ask all these people for reports, to be presented at another meeting. Though few, if any, of them like to write reports or attend meetings, in today's world they would feel slighted if not asked.

So at day's end my friend is still without a decision. He returns to a deskfull of telephone messages and correspondence which could have been answered in the time saved by making the decision himself. He knows, of course, what the decision should be, and he's fairly sure that the meeting group knows he knows and has already anticipated him. But it will take them a few days to make it look as if they worked it out by themselves. Meanwhile he must make it look as if he depends heavily on the wisdom and specialized experience of the group. He may even get a good idea from one of them.

Feeling bushed, he goes home to his wife, hoping for an escape from the agony of cajolery but finding instead a series of mediation problems lined up and waiting for him at the door. It has been raining and the five children have been driving mother out of her mind. The sitter wouldn't come because the last time she got poked in the eye. The cleaning woman had a dental appointment that somehow lasted all day, so the beds aren't made and his shirts are still unironed. The oil people forgot to fill the tank last week and today the burner gasped its last. His wife's parents have said they'd like to drop in later in the evening, but the wife of an out-of-town customer is in town and has asked them to join her for a drink at her hotel. Just then the phone rings and it's a neighbor asking if he can get a certain record player wholesale. And for heaven's sake will he do something about that mashie with the split shaft that's been standing in the hall. The children keep whacking themselves and each other with it, and first thing you know it will



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be broken *all* the way through. The phone rings again just as they are sitting down to dinner. It's Bill, from the plant. He won't be at the meeting day after tomorrow because he's going you-know-where, so he wants to put in his two cents' worth before. . . .

Is it any wonder that this man grew a bumper crop of ulcers? Or that his wife lost fifteen pounds of needed weight and had to be sent away for a month's rest? Yet this man is his own boss and his wife the mistress of a fine suburban home.

As many couples will testify, anxieties can creep up on a trusted employee as well—despite all the kindness and consideration and security benefits his employers heap upon him. This man-made purgatory is red-hot in suburbs where many families have been transferred from somewhere else. Beautiful homes and high-quality facilities can't seem to make up for the insecurity of rootlessness in displaced families. In their groping for roots, corporate life becomes inseparable from private life and more restlessness sets in. Often overheard at cocktail parties, at the country club or over the lunch table is, "How long do you expect to be here?" And the reply, often as not, "I don't think they'll hold us here longer than three or four years. Fellow before me got out in three." Such repartee is contagious and unsettles the community pride of natives as well. Only the aggressively loyal can escape it.

Even though customers and associates are well-settled and congenial and the way smoothed by mutual respect, you never have to look far to see tense faces over midday martinis. And the inscrutable smile of the 24-hour-a-day salesman is everywhere. Wives of colleagues and customers and competitors run across each other repeatedly in schools and shops and clubs and churches. Often the measure of a good wife, among other things, is how guarded and harmless her conversation can be without

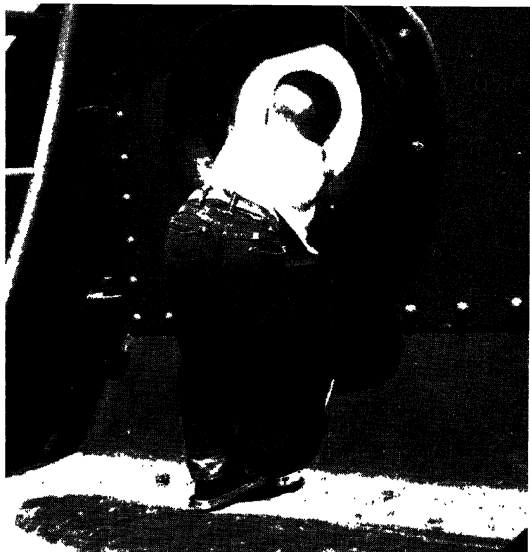
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actually seeming so; how to look casual without looking sloppy; how to talk gaily and interestingly about subjects of mutual interest without getting on dangerous ground; how to listen to useful gossip without appearing too interested; how to get away from each other quickly enough, or to stick around long enough, without appearing overanxious to do either.

In such a climate individuality is bound to suffer. The population tends to be homogenized—dressing alike, talking alike, entertaining alike, furnishing alike, and suggesting a concert of current interests and similarity of background that often does not in fact exist. Some women seem to enjoy this hocus-pocus, but the effect on the average girl with children to raise, a house to redecorate, a husband to soothe, a mother-in-law to care for, distant friends to keep in touch with, or whatever, can be exhaustingly diverting. And her tension spreads to others, like us.

Our gradual release from the more urgent do-it-yourself projects gained us little respite. Not only were there dim-viewers, ulcer cases and displaced families to get along with, but an enriched program of family administration as well. Housekeeping—despite dishwasher, clothes washer, dryer, automatic range, hooded range exhaust, two refrigerators, swish-clean rubber and cork tile floors, convertible aluminum storm windows, automatic space and hot water heating, king-size closets, fold-down kitchen table and benches and many new ideas we built into the house—continued to be a big time consumer. The kids were still too young to take on a serious amount of it. We'd given up trying to find permanent live-in help. Day helpers wanted to come only when they were least needed, between nine and five. When we suggested a full day's pay for working the hours of 6:30 to 9 A.M. and 5 to 8 P.M., the idea met with incredulous refusal. The seven-dollar-a-day woman

*Craig takes a last look  
at his American home-  
land.*





*On the terrace: Craig, 4;  
Katie; Karen, 6; Brian, 7;  
Dick; and Barry, 8.*

*Arucas, banana capital  
of the Eastern Hemi-  
sphere.*



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who came once a week often had to stay ten dollars' worth to make a dent in the job. Even then, supervision was required and the automatic appliances frightened and confused her.

One of the jobs that galled Katie most was sorting and distributing clothes after they'd been laundered. No one else in the world could do it for her, and if it wasn't done practically every day the confusion in the morning or before parties was awful. Why did we need so many clothes, and why did they have to be washed so often? I usually pitched in to dress the three older kids for school and Craig for play, and found myself at five minutes before train time searching the house for jackets that were supposed to be on the stair rack, rubbers that were supposed to be in the cellar rack or snow suits that never hung anywhere with great success.

Throughout the adult turmoil of these years the children went their apparently unruffled way. They thrived on obstructed hallways, paint cans, tile trimmings, lumber ends and dismembered cupboards. They loved to hear doorbell, telephone and television all going at the same time, willingly adding a few of their own sound effects. As we had anticipated in North Africa, they were growing and playing as a happy group. What we had *not* anticipated was that every little noise would be multiplied by four, so that even a routine operation like answering the supper call would sound like T.R.'s cavalry charging San Juan Hill. As I said, they *appeared* unruffled. We could look back later and see that they too lived under the insidious specter of tension.

Because they had safety in numbers, the children's menu, mealtime, playtime, bedtime and excursions were planned to suit their interests and desires. My workbench was always piled high with broken toys, wounded animals or vehicles with wheels off. At this I was a helpless slave. If I didn't repair the

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old, I would have to replace it with a new one. Otherwise our voracious little consumers would borrow from the neighbors' children, who were willing connivers. It was a magnificent trap. At the time we sailed for the Canary Islands I provided all maintenance for two tricycles, a pedal tractor, a pedal fire engine, a kiddie car, a five-foot Irish Mail, three wagons, four wheelbarrows, a scooter, a mobile multi-jointed metal horse, a folding doll carriage, two pairs of roller skates and two wheeled cultivators. In the oversize garage we built for two cars there was barely room for our one.

In many other ways life seemed unreasonably complicated. Breadwinning, in a company as well organized and integrated as mine, was by itself only a part of the week's effort. Commuting, for instance, introduced its own set of tensions, as did chauffeuring to airport, to distant birthday parties and Sunday school, which hour never coincided with church. Then there was bill paying; tax paying; shopping; civil defense; PTA; bazaar committee work; delivering and picking up things for repair; snapping off abandoned radios; rationing TV; adjusting thermostat or air conditioner; answering telephones and doorbells; setting the garbage and trash at the curb on the proper day (often forgotten until the following day); garage cleaning; mass polishing of shoes; supervising (and stumbling over) collections of shells, stamps, stones, premium cards and bottle caps; finding and picking up sitters; settling backyard arguments; writing tardy excuses for school, turning out lights; closing garage doors, car doors, refrigerator doors, dryer doors, bedroom doors and outside doors—doors the kids were old enough to open but too young to close; and hundreds of other seasonal and unseasonal chores. Undone jobs faced us whichever way we turned. Even our wedding photos lay unmounted in the album we'd bought nine years before.

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Yet how much of this busyness was absolutely necessary? Hadn't we brought on most of it ourselves? Embellishments upon life's basic need for food, fun, issue and shelter had grown a la Frankenstein. Like too many crystal buttons on a lace blouse. Like the seven combat men it now takes to get one infantryman into a position to shoot the enemy. Or like the factory receptionists, letter writers, cost engineers, gate guarders, morale boosters, customer wooers and form-filler-outers who outnumber the actual makers of the product.

Clearly, Katie and I had been trying to do too much, too fast, too thoroughly. In our unconscious effort to reach a satisfying plane of efficiency and perfection, work and play had become intermixed and we were forgetting how to relax. Housework, office work, shopping, sports, child rearing, partying and community work were extensions of each other, if not actually simultaneous. Men talked house repair in the office and office work at home. Women talked child rearing at parties and housework at community meetings. I've never transacted business on a golf course, but I have been known to justify watching a TV whodunit because I might see or hear something useful to my writing. We once knew a woman who would never permit herself to be seen in her front yard without a broom or a rake, another who would never sit down in her back yard because people might think her lazy; another who objected to her salesman-husband's week-end tennis unless he was playing with a customer or a prospect. I remember meeting a doctor at a cocktail party who kept looking at his watch every so often until, as everyone was leaving, he explained almost apologetically that this was the first party in ages where he hadn't been called away by a patient. Though we hadn't reached these extremes of invention and self-induced tension, we were certainly losing sight of where work left off and

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leisure began. True leisure, practiced with the unabridged abandon of a Stepinfetchit, was slipping farther and farther from our grasp.

"What," we asked ourselves, "should we do about all this? How can we sweep away the trivia and concentrate on the really pleasant and worthwhile things, the things we've always longed to do?"

One night we sat up late and made a written list of such things. First off, I said I'd like to know the children better, to take them places in an unhurried manner, to write some stories for them, to convert my transient visa to a permit for permanent residence in their sovereign world. Both of us vowed that when one of them came to us with a piece of jumbled monologue we'd let him *finish* it. It seemed to us that millions of grownups might be better able to express themselves today if their parents had given them more than half a chance to hold an audience when they were very young. Both of us wanted to keep up better with their inner thoughts and problems, to steer and inspire and punish, where necessary, with the patience and wisdom which more leisure would allow. It's a sorry day when kids have to get their fatherly advice from a breakfast food hero. Yet some things were crying for attention—Barry's pitching arm, for instance. Brian's reluctance to speak directly to people. Craig's early talent for carrying a tune. Karen's fear of dogs. A tendency by all of them to seek physical combat with all comers. Dozens of little things like these, all much easier to tackle in the tender years.

For ourselves, we wanted to read more books and magazines, buying out the bookstalls and browsing the libraries, discussing with friends the works as we read them. While we still had our good health we wanted to spend more time swimming, tumbling, walking, fishing, sailing, getting my waistline back to



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thirty-two. Other times, we decided, we'd like to stretch out on a beach with nothing to do but contemplate—and without a guilty feeling. We wanted some good steady help in the house. We wanted to learn more about the magic of cookery and the romance of fine wines. We wanted to develop our minds to stimulate others and open more easily to the stimulation of others.

Perhaps what we needed was a different standard of living. An attempt to bury ourselves in another culture, in a more relaxed atmosphere away from the American influence. A step forward into a simpler life that would free our minds of the nagging, unproductive daily traffic snarl and open new turn-pikes of thought and action.

Obviously the time had come for our long trip—the one we began saving for in the army. But how, and where, and what about my job and the kids' schooling? With Katie at thirty-three, me at thirty-six and Barry, Brian, Karen and Craig just approaching eight, seven, six and four, wasn't this a good time to stay put? Some friends said yes, to wait til the children are grown, to wait til I'm a key man at the office, to wait til retirement when we would have no responsibilities and a potful of money, social security and annuities and could "do it up right."

But to wait, we felt, would be too late. It would be like repainting after the rust sets in, or pruning after the tree has grown gangly. For money, we could take what remained of the army fund, plus what we'd saved through do-it-ourselves, about \$5000 in all. The company saw some wisdom in the idea and generously agreed to a fourteen-month leave of absence. My boss offered to buy our Plymouth station wagon as a wedding gift for his daughter. James Trend, a warm-hearted realtor with a thoroughgoing sense of service, agreed to rent our house,

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take care of it, sort and forward our mail and pay all local bills that would come due during the year. William Reynolds, superintendent of the Haddonfield School System, checked on the progress of our eldest three and said, "By all means take them out!" He promised to put them back in their own classes upon our return no matter how little schooling they would or would not get while away. "Do them just as much good as hanging around here," he added with jovial disregard for the inviolability of formal education, "they may need special attention for a month or so after they get back, but it's nothing to worry about."

Where to go? We canvassed the world with an open mind. No place was too distant, no people too strange, so long as certain conditions could be met. First, we decided to eliminate climate as a living complication. Year-round warmth would mean no coats or woollens or door-closing problems; low rainfall would mean no rainwear. Second, living costs would have to be a third or half of what they'd been at home. Third, we should be within twenty-four hours of first-class medical care. Fourth, we should at least have access to some well-educated and well-traveled people. Fifth, we'd like to be able to swim every day in the year. Sixth, we should learn a permanently useful foreign language. Seventh, and most important, the tempo of life should be easygoing. What would be perfect, we decided, was a beach-side cottage on the outskirts of a peaceful subtropical (but arid) village. Did such a Utopia exist?

To make a selection, we collected three years' worth of *National Geographic* and *Holiday* magazines; Sydney Clark's book on South America; David Dodge's *Poor Man's Guide to Europe*; Harian Publications' *Travel Routes Around the World*, *Bargain Paradises of the World* and *Retire Young and Start*

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*Living.* From these, spread out excitingly on our Hollywood bed after the kids were asleep (we didn't tell them until eight weeks before sailing time), we culled a list of forty "possibles" which included offbeats like Kenya and St. Helena. Gradually we whittled these down to five: Antigua, Guatemala; Lima, Peru; Cuernavaca, Mexico; Funchal, Madeira; Las Palmas, the Canary Islands of Spain. I then visited the consul of each of these countries to discuss intimate living questions, like do they have cow's milk and can we get around easily without a car and are there mosquitoes and where are the schools and what are they like and what does it cost to hire a housemaid?

At this juncture I've got to tell one on myself. The Spanish Consul in Philadelphia received me graciously, via telephoned appointment and calling card, and we had a jolly chat about the Canaries. Toward the end of the conversation I remarked that it was going to be a big undertaking to move my large family across to Africa and down to the Canaries and back, and then the fatal question: "Doesn't Spain have some quiet little islands much closer—say, in the Caribbean?"

The consul looked at me steadily for a moment, to make sure I was not trying to pull his leg. "It's a pity, Mr. Walter," he purred, "that your President McKinley did not anticipate your wishes fifty-five years ago last month, when he took from Spain the last of the lands discovered by Columbus."

After the consular interviews we were set to make a final choice. Guatemala got the axe because of political trouble brewing there. Lima because of the weird fog that folks said blotted out the sun for several months, and because the money exchange rate was growing less favorable. Mexico, because we heard that American domination and many of our hopped-up habits had penetrated all but the dinkiest one-donkey towns.

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Madeira because its winter temperatures were reported on the chilly side and because its Portuguese language would not be so useful as Spanish. So the Canaries got the nod.

Finding a way to get there, though a challenging sport, was not so easy. Grand Canary Island lies in the Atlantic, only 700 miles southwest of Gibraltar and less than a hundred miles off the coast of the Spanish Sahara, yet it was impossible to get there from the U.S.A. without changing ships or planes. We found we could fly there in twenty-five hours, plus a few hours' lay-over in Madrid, but the tourist fare alone would run us about \$1640 one way, and it seemed brutally unfair to have to gavel four little moppets into twenty-five hours of wiggle-free silence. Besides, to squeeze a year's clothing and equipment into our 176-pound baggage allowance would be ridiculous, and I knew from experience the insidious pitfalls that await one who ships his baggage separately.

As for ships, there was a Spanish passenger service from New Orleans to Spain, stopping at the neighboring island of Tenerife, and a similar Italian service from Houston. They, too, put us into the sixteen-hundred dollar bracket, not counting travel from Philadelphia to the Gulf ports, and we knew that these passenger ships, with their necessary segregation and formality, would not be as much fun for the kids as a freighter. At eighteen, I had worked my way around the world on thirteen freighters of eight nationalities, and remembered vividly the exhilarating freedom and relaxation and intimate affinity with the lore of the sea which is enjoyed by freighter crewmen and passengers alike.

I heard of the Royal Rotterdam Lloyd line while wandering through the Philadelphia Bourse one day on my lunch hour. I talked to one of the line's freight representatives there. He told me that these fast, modern Dutch freighters stopped at Casa-

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blanca, Morocco, on their way from New York to the East Indies, and that I could apply for passage from William C. Borgers in New York's Chrysler Building. That's the way you find a freighter. Sometimes you can get a tip from a travel agency, but to explore all possibilities takes leg work—to freight representatives, exporters, consulates, or through the pages of the *Journal of Commerce* and the *Classified Telephone Directory*. Harian Publications' *Travel Routes Around the World* is a big help here, too, though no book or booklet can possibly keep abreast of the maze of changes in freighter routings. The fine ship we took was listed in *no* publication I ever saw, yet finding it and a connecting French Paquet ship from Casablanca led to a memorable experience for all of us and saved \$600 one way.

To say that we just packed up and left would be unfair to anyone else with a dilemma like ours. But four months before sailing time we lit into all arrangements with an eager zest that wilted the obstacles. Katie took Spanish in a night school for fourteen weeks. Karen reported to Brian's first-grade teacher every day after kindergarten for nine weeks' tutoring in English reading, which we felt she should master before tackling Spanish. She didn't know what it was for, but she was delighted to catch up with Brian. He, on the other hand, was clearly griped to have a girl pick up in nine weeks what he'd worked nine months to get.

Brian, like many of childhood's second-born, found life's ups and downs more like bumps and ditches. There was always someone to catch up with or get even with. Barry, because of his bigness and glibness and natural dexterity. Karen, with her quickness and wisdom and petite feminine priorities. Craig, with the many privileges which fall to the youngest in the family. Brian's most pleasurable thoughts, therefore, often

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verged on the macabre. His prized textbook was Charles Addams' *Monster Rally*, a collection of demoniacal cartoons. And in the days when *The Yellow Rose of Texas* topped all the songs in the Hit Parade, Brian announced that he was going to "go down there an' pick it."

"But it's not a flower, silly," said Karen, the all-knowing.

"Sure I know," said Brian. He flashed her a glorious twinkle with his elfin eyes. "It's a girl, and that's why I'm goin' down there an' pick it."

One Saturday we drove up to Princeton to talk to David Dodge, who had written a cracking good story on the Canaries for *Holiday*. He gave us the address of a man in Las Palmas, Grand Canary. We promptly wrote him to rent us a house in advance. His casually-worded reply said, "Always many houses to rent—come pick your own." To me, this was good news. Katie, however, could envision weeks of house-hunting, kids sitting on suitcases, camping without camping gear.

To remove some of the curse from the transition, I wrote for reservations at a small Las Palmas hotel, bought from Sears Roebuck a fifty-foot roll of plastic screening, and from the Astral Corporation a dandy little 2½-cubic foot electric refrigerator which weighed only seventy pounds. I intended to carry the latter as hand luggage, and planned carefully my reply to bon-voyage-wishers who might ask, "Dick, what's that in your left hand?" To which I would reply in a casual, offhand way, "Oh, that? That's Astral, our refrigerator." But my effort to stroll nonchalantly up the gangplank with a refrigerator in my hand was successfully overwhelmed by five white-jacketed Indonesians.

The refrigerator was the only thing that wouldn't compress into our four locker trunks and three suitcases. I'll recommend Katie to a sardine-packing plant foreman any day. One trunk

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was filled with books and writing materials, another half-filled with a typewriter and a radio and the screening. Into the remaining space she squeezed sheets, blankets, a year's supplies and equipment and a warm-weather wardrobe (including replacements) for six people.

In making up a medical kit for the great unknown, Katie's professional status was invaluable. Our family doctor entrusted her with a year's supply of aureomycin, penicillin, dramamine, codein, aspirin, auralgan, secanol, neo-synephrine, penicillin ointment and sundries like Band-Aids, compresses, Tums, ice bag, cotton applicators, tape, thermometer and hypo syringe. She also prepared the kids for three weeks of mass inoculations, with (they thought) the unfeeling efficiency of a nurse. This was the day we broke the news of the trip, and after the first howling round of typhoid, paratyphoid, tetanus and smallpox Barry turned to Katie with glistening resentment in his eyes. "If this is what it takes to leave America, I don't see why anybody ever leaves!"

After our group passport came through—with six of us pop-eyed emigrants in one photograph—I bought through our bank the legal limit of Spanish currency at a 10 per cent discount and dropped it into the safe deposit box to await our departure. The saving on this little transaction was enough to pay all living expenses for our first month in Grand Canary. Though we took along some dollar travelers' checks for emergencies, we later wrote for all of our Spanish money requirements to be sent at an 8 per cent saving by bank transfer from Philadelphia.

As the end of May, and sailing time, drew near, farewell parties added to the glitter and excitement of the undertaking. One of them gave us a particular thrill. Our twenty-five closest neighbors, none of whom we'd known for more than two years, gave a full-scale farewell dinner, with gifts and speeches and

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rare good fun. Something in the spirit of this gathering smacked of an earlier day, and like the bridegroom who falters before the altar, we wondered, fleetingly, if we were really doing the right thing. Several verses from a home-brewed serenade, chanted by electrical engineer George Ryder, set the heart-warming tempo:

The Walters are leaving,  
Oh haven't you heard?  
To some faraway place  
That sounds like a bird.

Oh why are they leaving  
These forests of Penn?  
Where the Delaware Valley  
Is hailed by all men.

We will all miss them,  
Yet chortle with glee,  
To find our walks clear  
Of much childish debris.

No scooters, no wagons,  
No more Irish Mail,  
No ringing of bells  
To no earthly avail.

No eagle-eyed Katie  
Attempting to stalk  
A Brian or a Karen  
On some neighbor's walk.

Yes, we will miss them,  
As good neighbors true,  
We'll want them all back—  
The whole doggone crew!



*Part III*

GETTING BANANAFIED



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### Part III: GETTING BANANAFIED

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On the morning of June 24, three weeks after sailing from New York, I awoke to the strange and wonderful orchestration of a Grand Canary morning. It was as if an entire aviary had been moved to our bedside, with thousands of tiny throats exclaiming at the sunrise. Propping myself on an elbow I tried to identify them on the vines at the window. Some were canaries, all right. Not the yellow kind, so familiar at home and on the Continent, but pale green ones with faint yellow markings on their wings. Canario people had been quick to put us straight on this. And to point out that the birds had been named for the islands—not vice versa—and that the islands had been named for their dogs. That was the Romans' doing. They found wild and ferocious dogs in the islands when they arrived, so they dug into their latin books and came up with the name *Isles of the Dogs*, or *Insulae Canariensis*.

A somewhat scatter-bred descendant of these dogs interrupted my bird-watching at this instant. She was fussing over Andres, who was both her master and our gardener, as he carried our drinking water up the mountain in two pails suspended from a shoulder yoke.

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"Quiet, Mariposa," he said softly to the dog, "the gentleman is sleeping."

Intrigued by this contrast with America's daybreak trash-can-rattlers, I rolled out, pulled on my terry robe and stood before the full-length mullioned doors that were still folded open for the night.

"Good morning, Andres!" I said, admiring how well his salt-and-pepper beard contrasted with his tanned face.

"Good morning, my gentleman!" he replied, doffing his hat without spilling a drop of the precious water. He went on to say something else I couldn't understand, and then I wanted to ask him whose roosters had crowed in the middle of the night, but both my sending and receiving sets were jammed by an appalling confusion of French, Italian and Spanish. It was just as well. The offending roosters were Andres' own and I would certainly have hurt his feelings at this early stage of our relationship. That old saw about roosters announcing the dawn of day is a lot of poppycock. They crow any time they feel proud of themselves, which is often.

By now the children were responding to the magnetism of the morning, and Brian—always up at what Katie called "a disgustingly early hour"—followed Andres around to the stone filter which is said to remove all "bad" from the water. It looks like a big stone hourglass, encased in a six-foot-high shuttered closet, much like the birdhouse-like thingamajigs the weatherman uses to protect his outdoor instruments. When we moved in the day before, Katie laid down a rule that no one was to drink out of the filter. "Fela will boil the water and put it in the snouted earthenware jug," she announced, "that's where you go for a drink."

The kids' super-civilized minds were reasonably receptive to this germ warfare strategy. After all, they'd just come from

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French Morocco where filth and disease stalked every street and drooly-eyed Arabs carried water in the bellies of hairy pigskins. But Fela, our new Canario cook, cast a suspicious ear. To her, filter water was on a purity par with angels' tears. Why does anyone want to go boiling all the flavor out of it?

Craig, our sensitive little package of fair hair, came to me with his pajama top raised expectantly. "Scratch my back, Dad?"

"Let's scratch where we can look at the view," I said, and led him out to the arbor which blazed with bougainvillea in the morning sun. On one of the folding wooden armchairs he assumed the position of a praying mantis. In another, I sat like a robed grandee of the old school (back-scratching division) and gazed upon Grand Canary's Angostura Valley and the mountainside villa that was to be our home. Before us stretched a heady blend of banana plantations, orange, lemon and apricot groves, vegetable gardens, orange-roofed haciendas, wild flowers, rockeries, flowering cactus, evergreen forests and sheer rock cliffs—all topped by 2000 to 6000-foot mountains that were grudgingly sharing with the shadowy valley the sunshine they'd had to themselves for so long.

Our villa, which we leased from the headmaster of a private school, stood eight miles from and 1500 feet above the sea. Some Swiss artists had lived there before us, and judging from the pile of shredded paintings left for burning they must have given up trying to reproduce the Angostura's natural palette. As I gazed upon the world from this promontory—an activity we never tired of doing—my nerves felt sedated and my mind stimulated in a mystical manner. Morning, afternoon and evening, through the months that followed, visitors' eyes were magnetized by the beauty and wildness of this ever-changing mural that walled our world. The valley floor, marked by a wiggly road lined with geraniums and poinsettias, lay 500 feet below the villa,

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and the two were joined by a narrow rocky drive that climbed to our door like a bedspring. The morning was so still I traced the click of a hoe to a man a quarter of a mile away. Presently I heard instead the slow, muffled thump of leaden hoofs. It was a camel! He was laden with a preposterous clump of cactus and cornstalks, and by his side walked a spry, mustachioed man wearing a black beret. He smiled warmly and waved a greeting to me, and then to Fela who was scaling our precipitous road with a teakettle of milk in her hand and a bundle of bread on her head.

She smiled a shy greeting as she passed, and in a few minutes Craig and I could hear her singing the high, plaintive notes of a Canario song.

Villa La Solana, which lived up to its name by catching sunshine all day long, was designed in an authentic Canary tradition with stone walls two feet thick, slanted orange tile roof, glassed-in abutments at both ends, exposed wood beam ceilings, magnificent ceramic tile floors throughout and a rare-in-these-parts fireplace. There were three good-sized bedrooms, an 18 by 21 foot living room and a gigantic black marble bathroom with toilet, washbowl, bidet, six-foot bathtub, stall shower and dressing table. It was a bathroom worthy of America's finest towel advertising. Only trouble: there was no hot water running through these beautiful fixtures, and for the first week no cold water either. "But who needs water?" the kids wanted to know, "particularly in the bathtub?"

The service wing had a primitive kitchen with a two-burner charcoal range, a Primus kerosene stove and a hodgepodge of cupboards and counters inlaid with smooth, red bricks. The dining room adjoined it. As did a storage room and large maid's quarters with connecting bathroom. The kitchen was grimly dark. By the light of the two squinty windows high on one

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wall you could just make out a potato on the counter. Fela solved that by leaving the outside door open. After all, the kitchen in her own cottage didn't even *have* a door. This made things easier for everybody—particularly the flies.

The entire villa was completely and tastefully furnished, from patio furniture to bed linens to trilingual library. Some of the furniture looked as if it had seen service in the Alhambra. There was, for example, a grand piano, sadly out of tune, which must have been landed there with a skyhook. There were three antique clocks that went when they felt like it, chiming anywhere up to thirty-five o'clock. In every bedroom hung a large, hand-finished crucifix, so realistic it frightened the kids. There were several door handles that turned but nothing happened. The master bedroom's bishop's bed was certainly impressive enough to have been slept in by Ferdinand and Isabella. We tended to quite overlook its coil-less spring and springless mattress because it, like so many other accessories, was an integral part of "the picture."

Living room, dining room and maid's quarters opened toward the mountains onto a delightful little grassy courtyard which snuggled into a rock garden on the back side, into the garage and sun deck on another, and into the L-shaped house on the other two sides. A fountain and fishpond, into which the ever-inquisitive Brian fell within an hour of our arrival, marked the middle of the courtyard, and deep in the recess of the rockery was a mossy cavern where we cooled our wine. Flames of bougainvillea licked at the ponderous oak gates that shut out the upper reaches of the valley. Geraniums, lillies, rubber trees and dozens of other vines and flowers crowded in from all sides. It was a world within a world.

On the valley side we stepped out of the living room into a flagstone patio that seemed to hang in space. There was another

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fountain and fishpond, another flaming arbor, palm trees, cedars, pines and flowering cactus bristling beyond the wall. The poinsettias were eight to ten feet high and stopped blooming just long enough for us to miss them before again exploding into a fiery fountain of arrested pinwheels.

Andres, whom we grew to love with great trust and affection, recrossed the patio with empty pails swinging from his knotty yoke, plucking spent blooms from the geraniums as he passed. For me he made "do-it-yourselfism" as extinct as the brontosaurus. Besides his water chores, he was on hand seven days a week, mostly at his convenience, to keep up the yard, make minor repairs or fetch carpenters and mechanics for the ones beyond his ken. He toted big cans of kerosene, moved trunks, washed cars, disposed of trash and garbage, cleaned chimneys, minded the children, settled arguments, irrigated the flowers, tended the courtyard lawn, cleaned out the fishponds, chopped wood and went to bed every Saturday night with a bottle of cognac.

Trailing Andres across the patio was Brian, still in his pajamas, "Hi Dad," he said, knowing full well that wearing pajamas outdoors was pretty special, "nobody can see me out here because they're no other houses!"

"All the same," I said, "you'd better change into shorts. You too, Craig."

"No shoes, Dad?"

"No shoes."

"No shirt?"

"No shirt."

"No underwear?"

"No underwear."

"Hooray!" And off they ran to execute the assignment *unassisted*.



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Katie—seldom one to rush the sunrise—appeared presently and joined me in a clasped-knee position on the patio wall.

“Happy?” she asked. She scanned my face and tucked away the reply even before I made it.

“You bet, and at peace with the world.”

“I feel much as I did that summer in Bavaria,” she said. “Just married. The strain and confusion of the war just over. That apartment with a view of the Alps. Lots of beautiful and exciting places to explore. A whole new life ahead of us. *This* is like that. Like starting life all over again.”

“Except,” I said, “this doesn’t have to end the way that did.” I paused to listen to music floating up from the valley. The mountains were turning purple under the heightening rays of the sun. I picked an unfamiliar blue and white blossom from an overhanging bush and hurled it like a dart into Katie’s hair. It stuck fast. Gave her a festive sort of look. “Lots more where that came from,” I said, “I don’t think we’ll ever want to leave!”

Katie looked away and let her eyes wander from the cluster of valley houses nestling into a banana grove—yellow against deep green—and up to the crisp blue of the sky and back to the brilliant red bougainvillea which spilled over the white brick arbor like strawberries on a sundae. “It’s beautiful,” she said at last, “the climate is incredible, and I’m deliciously relaxed. And so long as you don’t try to make an Osa Johnson out of me I’ll feel like the luckiest American woman in or out of captivity. But,” she finished firmly, “don’t you start talking about spending the rest of our lives here. Not yet!”

Footsteps sounded on the kitchen patio and around the corner came Fela with two large cups of steaming coffee on a tray. Katie set one on the flat stone in front of her and turned to Fela. “Why are the bells ringing in the valley this morning?” she asked.

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"It's the Fiesta of San Juan," Fela replied, her dark eyes sparkling with pride. "Did you see last night the fires on the mountainside?"

We told her we had watched them from the arbor, as one by one they flared up, crackled in the still night air, then quickly died. Barry had asked if we could light one for Mommie's birthday on the Fourth of July.

"The fires tell when the fiesta begins," she explained. "People began many weeks ago to save sticks and cactus trunks for the fires. Such things are needed for cooking, but for San Juan we are always happy to give them up."

"If this is a fiesta," said Katie to me after Fela had returned to the kitchen, "Fela can leave after lunch. Seems to be the custom around here to work seven days a week, but to leave early on Sunday and fiestas."

"What are we having for lunch?" I asked, from reprehensible habit.

"Haven't the faintest idea," answered Katie with a dreamy smile. "What's more, I don't intend to find out!"

"Whatever it is," I said, "it can be improved with champagne. I'll meet you here on the patio at eleven."

"You didn't!"

"Sure—we've got to celebrate! Sleeping in our own beds. Eating at our own table. Having a place to hang up the toothbrushes. The bottle is cooling in the cavern—gently, on its side, like so." I didn't break the spell by adding that this highly recommended Spanish champagne cost only 62¢ a bottle.

"Ye gods," laughed Katie, "champagne in the morning! Suppose someone walks in on us the way Bob Murphey did in Grosse Pointe. What will the natives think?"

"The natives celebrate whenever they have something to celebrate," I said. "Remember those fishermen at Las Nieves?"

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This was the snug little fishing village where the men sat down for a couple of cognacs at high noon. They'd gone out before daybreak and returned at eleven with a whale of a catch, to be met at water's edge by beaming wives with open kettles and cheering kids with scruffy dogs. The catch lay two feet deep in the bilge of the boat and was scooped out with measuring pails to each participant's wife. There were six fishermen in the boat, which meant the catch was divided into twenty-five shares: one each for the fishermen, six for the boat, thirteen for the net. The older fishermen also owned part of the boat or the net, or both, so in the absence of a Univac electronic computer the wives had a lively discussion about the breakdown of these shares. Bare-bottomed babies sat on the warm stones and plunged their little hands into this or that kettle of fish. The scruffy dogs nosed around. A tomcat slunk away with his share gleaming like a knife between his teeth. This goosed up the landscape, but no one seemed to care. Everyone, in fact, appeared wonderfully happy. The women talked a streak. The men smoked and arbitrated, and when the catch went its divided way they heave-hoed the boat above the high-tide mark and retired in triumph to the village bistro. There they ordered up a round of cognacs at a nickel a shot, discussed the intricacies of the foray with men who'd stayed ashore mending nets and caulking boats, and basked in the adulation of their sons and sons' schoolmates just released for the siesta. This was no midday martini, sandwiched between business appointments to stimulate a forced-draft friendship. This was the cup of victory. When there was no victory there was no cup.

For us, our first day in Villa La Solana marked a victory of similar stature. Not that the freighter crossing had been an ordeal—far from it. The *Garret's* Indonesian boys whisked

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silently through their chores, tidying our four cabins, serving magnificent meals, doing the laundry, cutting hair, changing selections on the record player—even chasing ping pong balls. Our kids had the run of the ship, sopping up the lore of the sea and sooner or later duplicating every man-sized job aboard. They gave the rail a wide berth and thought every toot of the whistle an order to abandon ship. The thirteen adult passengers enjoyed dances, homemade floor shows, shuffleboard tournaments, even after-dinner speeches. Americans offered up toasts to the Queen of Holland; Dutch officers reciprocated to the President of the United States. Midmorning and mid-afternoon tea and goodies smoothed the day, while wild-eyed games of king-of-the-castle on the Number Four hatchcover turned the goodies into gristle. And at night, after the kids were stowed away, Katie and I wandered up to the fo'c'sle and sat in timeless silence while phosphorescent waves beat musically against the determined head of the ten-thousand-ton monster beneath us.

Our week in Morocco was another story. Children and Arabs, having so much in common, mix well—too well. They like to touch each other. They like to fondle foreign objects. They like to scratch their sores. They like to eat with their fingers. They like to sample any food in sight. They do *not* like to sample bathwater. To a parent well-grounded in the germ theory, particularly a nurse trained to sterilizè everything about a baby but the squeal, our week among the Arabs was a nightmare. Katie and I together had only four hands to match the kids' eight. At times we thought they had eight heads as well. To muddy matters, I had promised the editor of *Parade* that I would write a story of our freighter voyage, air-mailing it with photos within five days of our landing in Casablanca. You'd think I would have known better, having lived

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with the Arabs in 1937 and 1943, but when you're without children you can't possibly imagine what it's like being *with* them. My personal recommendation is that children should not be taken to Arab countries until they reach the age when they begin to disapprove of their parents.

The first morning I plunged into story-writing in our hotel room. Katie took all four out on the maddening streets, dodged demoniacal cabbies who steered with their horns and braked with their accelerators, got mobbed by frenzied Frenchmen and sinister-looking Arabs with open sores on their wandering hands, and gave up. Then she tried taking two at a time, leaving two to buzz around my desk like supercharged flies. I ran the gamut of shushery, from Dr. Gesell's calmly reasonable little talks. . . ("Now you help Dad to get this story to the magazine and we'll be able to buy some extra nice surprises when we get to Grand Canary!") . . . to a very unfatherly "STOBBIT!" Somehow, through clenched teeth, I completed an outline, introduction and photo captions and we stiff-armed our way to dinner.

Taking four little kids to *any* restaurant, in *any* country, is a highly questionable practice. But taking four little Americans, accustomed to eating their Rice Krispies at 5:30 P.M., to a Moroccan restaurant that serves sautéed calves' brains and doesn't open til eight, is a clear-cut case for the A.S.P.C.C. The proprietor met us at the door with open wine flasks which he proceeded to empty glug-glug into all water tumblers, the kids' included. With some arbitration we agreed on a half-inch of what Brian termed "Welch's Grape Juice" in the bottom of each glass. The proprietor was visibly wounded by this decision and explained with many gestures that his wine was the best 1953 Algerian Red and pointed out several French kids smaller than ours who were casually slugging the stuff down.

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We stuck to our decision, he set the half-full flasks in the center of the table, and about then several friends from our good ship *Garret* dashed in. This involved us watchful parents in such a giddy three-way conversation that we failed to notice the red columns in the wine flasks dropping like mercury at nightfall. Upon reaching the sidewalk, Karen spun slightly and sat down kerplow. She began to giggle. "This sidewalk," she said, "is the silliest sidewalk!"

Brian, normally the serious one, launched into a series of witty and senseless and irresponsible observations of the passing parade, then suddenly gave me an unusually direct look and said "Gee, I'm pretty funny tonight, aren't I?"

One of our *Garret* friends had noticed the two tippling but had kept her counsel.

The following day we thought we'd foil claustrophobia with a day at the beach at Fedala, about twenty miles north of Casablanca. As we boarded the creaky old Arab bus we came face-to-veil with some women from the country. They were wrapped from head to foot in white sheeting, with a single dark eye peering through a tiny opening in the folds. The kids recoiled. "Daddy!" cried Karen, clutching my sleeve; "I don't want a seat near those spooky ladies!"

A few miles short of Fedala I pointed out, with pardonable excitement, the irrigation ditch in an orange grove where a companion and I slept the night during our 1937 bicycle trip across North Africa.

"Why there?" demanded Barry looking distastefully at the baked mud clumps in the ditch. "Why not in a hotel?"

I realized suddenly that I could never explain how terribly important it was to sleep in that ditch.

The beach was almost deserted—perfect spot to write a story. We rented a three-sided, Foreign-Legion-type tent, un-

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dressed the kids and sent them off to build sand castles. "Ah!" cracked Katie, "the genius has peace at last." But one by one into my literary reveries came: "Daddy, the sand's hot on my feet!" or "Mommy, where's my shirt?" or "Why didn't we bring any shovels?" Nonetheless, a few sheets of yellow paper got covered before threat of sunburn drove us back to the hotel, the rest after dark in the crypt-like stillness that hung over five exhausted sleeping forms.

Three days to mailing time, four to sailing time, and somewhere in there we wanted to squeeze a three-hundred-mile round trip to Marrakech to give the kids a taste of real Bedouin stuff. Katie took them statue-climbing in the park while I rented a diminutive French Peugeot sedan, picked up the photos for the article and typed the first draft. *Garret* friends came to shoehorn us into the car, the kids discovered the sliding top panel "like the observation turret in a tank" and off we roared through camel land. Katie read the story aloud, I mentally improved it while driving, and the next day in Marrakech's Hotel L'Oasis I typed the final, keyed the photos, wrote a "twarn't nothin' atall" letter to the editor, enveloped the whole works in a frighteningly flimsy French envelope, picked up the gang at a sidewalk cafe and set out to see the bazaar, the snake charmers and a country fair.

In Casablanca the next day, French postal authorities were reluctant to accept and register such a package for air mail. When I pointed out that this was further dramatic evidence that Americans are lunatics, they finally laughed and gave in. But they were quickly bewildered when I asked to send photo negatives to the same destination on a separate plane. This clearly showed an unfriendly and distrustful attitude toward French pilots. Both planes flew true, through the ocean of air, and the story appeared on schedule.

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This very American pace—and the kids' stepped-up preoccupation with every sight, sound, smell, taste and touch—was unrelieved by a twenty-six-hour, roller-coaster boat ride down the shallow African West Coast. Our third-class cabins sat smack atop the propellers and our portholes were so close to the raging sea that a mechanic in a grimy beret came and bolted them closed with a giant wrench. Little good it did. Katie—who had won the outside bunk on a coin toss—awoke me in the night with a "Hey—the ocean's in bed with me!" Sure enough—I switched on the lights and found sea water gushing through the bolted portholes. Her bedding was soaked and an inch or so of foaming saline was eddying about our luggage on the deck.

Just then Karen knocked on the bulkhead of the adjoining cabin. "Craig's sink has spilled over," she shouted into the darkness. She couldn't believe that part of the Atlantic Ocean was actually sloshing about the cabin. Barry's bunk was even wetter than Katie's. A large puddle stood atop his blanket, in the depression formed by his curled-up knees. As there was an extra bunk in each cabin, and "Astral" had one to itself, Katie prepared the dry remaining one for herself and Barry. As I dumped Barry's leaden, still-sleeping form beside her, she looked at me with the deadly bombsight look that husbands known so well. You and your hundred-dollar saying!" she snorted. "Third-class on this submarine is strictly for the fish!"

We met most of our fellow third-class passengers at breakfast in the dining saloon. They were not fish. Some were French colonial workers returning to West Africa from a holiday in France. Some were Senegalese. Some were natives of the Ivory Coast and the Middle Congo. One well-dressed anthropoid, who looked as if his wife should be a duck-billed woman, was married instead to a handsome, smartly turned-out Oriental—the



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perfect heroine for a Pearl Buck novel. Their four children were indescribably good-looking, and so well-behaved they wouldn't even exchange grimaces with our gremlins.

"Look!" whispered Katie suddenly. I followed her gaze to a puffy-eyed French woman who was entering the saloon in curlers and a verree sheer housecoat. That was nothing. Next came a young mother in a pink nightgown, with a cardigan thrown lightly over her shoulders. That, again, was nothing. As our immaculately dressed Afro-Oriental family arose to leave the saloon we saw that boy child number four wore nothing below the belt but Nature.

All the way to Grand Canary the *Lyautey* continued to twist and thrust and stand on end. None of us "erupted," as Barry termed it, but Karen took fever an hour short of port. We had written ahead, fortunately, so awaiting us on the Las Palmas mole was a smiling Canario with two big pre-depression American touring cars to cart us and our year's gear to the beachfront Hotel Playa. The tiled promenade along this beach was filled with laughing young couples and groups of pretty girls strolling arm-in-arm and pretending not to notice groups of young men. Clothes, make-up and hair-dos were simple and unsophisticated, with bright reds and whites and contrasty black predominating. Guitar music floated in from the cafe next door. Some of the girls sang a little as they passed. Theirs was no small town, with close to 170,000 of Grand Canary's 370,000 souls, but I sensed a serene, confident, almost pastoral air about the throng—a vast contrast to the jerky, pushy, rackety crowds of New York and Casablanca. As the waves lapped gently over the khaki-colored sand and stars appeared over the soft-shouldered mountains of the island's heart land, I turned from our balcony and announced with deep conviction, "Folks, I think we've come to the right place."

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Katie was not so easily swayed. Karen's fever hit 103.6°. None of the boys wanted the unfamiliar olive-oil-soaked food that was provided with our obligatory full pension. They filled up on bread and bananas, met two towheaded Swedish girls, played hare-and-hounds through the hotel corridors and proceeded to take the place apart brick-by-brick. Our two rooms were separated by fifty feet of hallway which soon became a racecourse, and with the slightest effort the doors could be made to WHANG shut with echoing, tooth-rattling effectiveness. This went on through the second day, as a heavy cloud called "The Donkey's Belly" settled over the city and a chill trade wind blew across the reef and drove the sand castle set from the beach. The two little Swedish towheads—novel, cute and spirited as they were—inspired our three braves to greater heights of skulduggery and show-offery. They spoke not a word of each other's language, but the strange sounds uttered by one seemed completely comprehensible to the others. A word like "urklauff" would bring a burst of laughter and touch off a new game of dodge-'em. If they ran out on the beach they'd track sand through the lobby and up the highly-polished tiled stairs. Every time this happened the desk clerk whispered to the bellboy and a maid appeared with pail and floorcloth. We expected any moment to be thrown out of the hotel—and the Swedish family with us.

In a brave attempt to spell Katie and forestall eviction, I took the boys in turns, house-hunted about the city and eventually returned in triumph with a fourteen-year-old sitter who had learned English from her German grandmother. Though sweet and willing, she was no match for the boy's active minds and trigger-happy bodies. They exhausted her repertoire of games. They filled the coloring books with sunbursts of color. They devoured every remaining comic. Seven-year-old Brian worked

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the ten-year-old jigsaw puzzle in twenty minutes and turned to look for new fields to conquer. Talkative Barry, the eight-year-old extrovert, deafened her with chain-quoted excerpts from Ripley's *Believe It or Not*. "Why," asked Karen pointedly, "don't we put a television 'tenna on the chimney and make Howdy Doody come on?" "'Cause there's no chimney, silly!" snapped Brian. This was the first—and last—request for TV on Grand Canary. When the girl tried to start them on a Spanish lesson they all shrugged it off because as yet they'd had no need for it. "I wanta learn Dutch," declared Brian suddenly, "then I can work on the *Garoet*."

Then I helped matters not a bit by returning with the news that all of Las Palmas' ready-to-rent dwellings were row-houses.

"But we didn't come here to live in a city anyway," I quickly reminded Katie. "Tomorrow, if Karen's better, we'll pile the kids and the sitter in a touring car and look for a place along the East Coast."

We did. But along thirty miles of coastline there was nothing occupied or unoccupied that remotely resembled what we sought: "a beachside cottage on the outskirts of a peaceful village." There were peaceful villages, all right, but their tightly-packed clumps of stone buildings had no outskirts, no suburbs, no beachside cottages. While the American pays huge premiums for the privileges of waterfront property, the Canario avoids it at any price. While the American flees to the suburbs, the Canario villager—having no car—embraces the sociable congestion of the town. Even our eager search for sunshine—Miami's million-dollar ingredient—was greeted with quiet incomprehension. The sun here—though never intense—was considered something to avoid, to be shielded from one's person and shut out of one's house. Hand-in-hand with long

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skirts, high-necked dresses, long trousers and long-sleeved shirts were small windows, heavily shuttered and draped to produce continuously tomblike twilight from dawn to dusk.

There was an undeniable charm about some of these villages as we approached them on the road. As tourists, we might have wandered about in an insulated way, commenting delightedly with words like "quaint" or "picturesque." But as would-be residents, we looked through different eyes. The rose-colored glasses of the tourist gave way to a bacteriologist's microscope. Could that blackened, windowless cubicle with a pail of water, a table and a charcoal burner be ours? Could those iron-rail beds, with twisted wire or cord supporting a tickful of straw, do for *us*? Would *we* entertain in this living room, with its cold stone floor littered with goat manure tracked in from the street? Were the mangy children sitting on this stonewall the children from whom ours should learn to speak Spanish? And how would we go to the bathroom, when there was no bathroom—not even a Chic Sale?

This was "the simple life," all right, but how simple did we have to get?

We explored on the following day the rest of Grand Canary's accessible coastline. The scenery was scrumptious. Great green carpets of banana plantations unrolled from mountaintop to the foamy fringe of the sea. One village perched proudly on a towering islet of rock, affording every resident a combination of view, peacefulness, sunshine and sea air you couldn't buy for \$25 a day at a resort. Were we squeamish to squirm at the urine-soaked cobbles? Or at the boy Craig's age with flies on his eyelids? If this was the price of ulcer prevention it was a blank check we were not yet prepared to sign.

There was still the interior to explore, and we had several addresses to follow up. Back in Las Palmas that evening I ar-

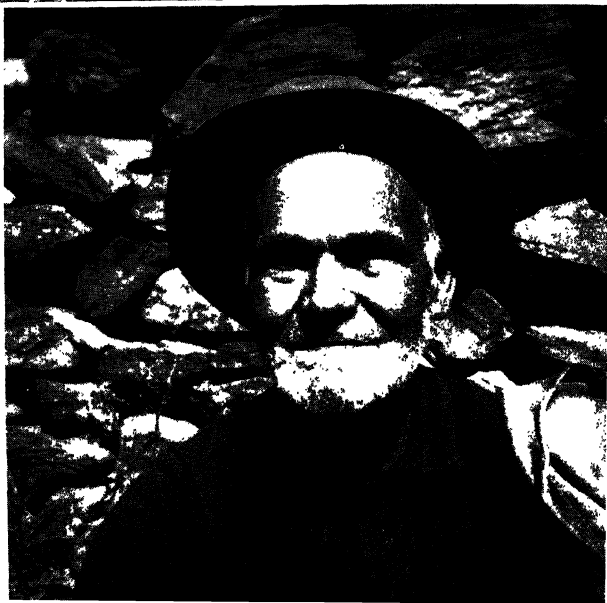
*Barry—getting bananafied.*



*Two Canario fishermen  
relax after beaching the  
catch.*



*A young girl of the Angostura Valley heads home with a full water jug.*



*This is Andres,  
our gardener.*

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ranged, with the friendly and helpful chief of the government information office, two visits for the morrow to houses up-country. But at the hotel the situation was fluid. Katie was in tears. Arabs, water through the portholes, Karen's fever, depressing weather, no home in sight, possible eviction from the hotel—it was too much.

This was obviously one of those moments husbands are made for, but I wasn't sure I was equal to it. My inclination was to let go a barrage of male logic—"big girl like you . . . thought nothing of moving forty-three times in the army . . . remember the retreat at Kasserine Pass . . . what do you expect in three days—the Taj Mahal? . . . ." But with the *savoir-unfaire* of man faced with homeless, disintegrating womanhood, I held my tongue and offered an absorbent shirt front.

After supper I came upon the Swedish girls' parents sitting quiet and composed in the lobby. "How do you *do* it?" I asked them. "You never seem to be worrying or snapping at your children."

The Swedish man smiled. "Oh that's the way of children," he replied in excellent English, "they have themselves a good time."

"Normally that's how I feel too," I said, "but aren't you afraid we'll all be put out of the hotel?"

He looked at me strangely. "I can promise that this will not happen," he said. "Didn't you know? I am the owner of this hotel."

The next day we found Villa La Solana, and gradually—very gradually—we began getting deliciously "bananafied." The origin of this term is obscure, but its meaning is clear. To be "bananafied" is to live like a banana plant. Its Spanish equivalent, *aplatanado*, is a localism in the Canary Islands that draws out-

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bursts of laughter in much the same way as mention of "Brooklyn" or "Texas" in the U.S.A. The banana plant, Grand Canary's Number One Breadwinner, grows lethargically but productively from an offshoot of a thick, pulpy stump stuck in the ground, into another thick, pulpy stump with wide, droopy leaves. A single bunch of bananas develops from a shy purple flower. The weight of this offspring is usually more than the parent cares to put up with, so a sort of crutch is placed beneath the joint of the stem. With this the banana plant drowzes happily through life, soaking up an abundance of sunshine from above and fertilizer and irrigation water from below, and asking no more. This process takes almost a year—just about a world's record for annual plants. So far as I could discover, it puts into life no more than it gets out, and *it's got to get before it gives*. Shortchange it on water, fertilizer or sunshine, and it placidly hands back a two-bit bunch of bananas. No hard feelings. It just doesn't live on credit. Nor, on the other hand, will a bonus of the above ingredients induce it to produce two bunches in place of its traditional one.

Note that the banana plant, and therefore the bananafied human being, is NOT lazy. He just doesn't crowd his capacity. He performs his job with distinction. His product is predictable and valuable. His life is simple, relaxed and serene—quite free of ulcers, hypertension, overtime, shock treatments, rest cures and five o'clock martinis. Grand Canary is home base for the bananafied. It remained to see how much of this way of life would rub off on the Walters in the year to follow.

The first part to rub off—and quickly—was the low cost of living. Rental of Villa La Solana—house, grounds, water, garage, furnishings, gardener, cook and housemaid all included—came to \$50 a month. Groceries for nine of us ran \$60 to \$70. This figure could have been much higher, however, had we



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tried to duplicate an American or English menu. One couple we met spent over \$100 a month for food for three, and even then they failed to reach home plate. Ours could have been even lower, moreover, if we had been willing to forsake imports entirely and stick to the unvarying diet of our Angostura neighbors. The fabulous staple food of our neighbors in the Angostura valley—cheaper and far tastier than bread—was *Gofio*, a stone-ground powder of sundried and toasted corn kernels. *Puchero* was an old standby, too. A spicy stew of beef, potatoes, carrots, cob corn, and any other available greens—even boiled whole pears! It was generally eaten only once a week—on Mondays—because beef was so expensive (25¢ to 35¢ a pound). Fish was so much cheaper (5¢ to 15¢ a pound) that Angostura folks served it two or three times a week, followed the next day, in each instance, by soup made from fish heads. On Wednesdays they made a salad, called *sancochos*, out of salted fish, boiled potatoes, yams and *el mojo*—a sauce made of hot spices, olive oil and vinegar. On other days they served a soft cheese made fresh from sheep's milk, sliced tomatoes, fried bananas, boiled artichoke flowers or for a special splurge—a fried egg atop a mountain of rice. At cooking rice, with that just-right balance between crispness and tenderness, dryness and moistness, I'll match the Canarios against Chinese, Japanese, Indians—anybody. You can fork down plateful after plateful, until only the sheepish old conscience begins to interfere.

This last paragraph tastes better than I intended. But add a brownish bread, a sticky almond candy, a hair-curling coffee, a volcanic wine and you just about have the Canario's lifetime menu. Sit an American at this table and by the end of the first week he starts looking over his shoulder for butter, jam, cocoa, sliced pineapple, ham, sirloin steak, standing rib roast, ham-

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burgers, toast, peanut butter, tea, ice cream and you-know-what-else. We filled in with butter from Argentina, jam from South Africa, tea from England, hard cheese from Holland and an occasional canned ham from Portugal—all of which probably doubled our grocery bill.

We also found it tough to avoid manufactured goods. Katie can smell a hardware store four blocks away but as we began to follow more and more the example of our neighbors we discovered that our first month's total expenses of \$215 fell almost automatically to \$165 in the second month.

Some of the local prices read like a "One Hundred Years Ago Today" column. To a father of four children, Grand Canary's most dreamy bargain was haircuts. With 55¢ in our collective pocket, the five of us could wander into Antonio's sociable shop down on the Angostura road and get treated to first-class haircuts. No electric clippers, no individually sterilized towels, no vibrating machine or electric lather-maker, but plenty of good old-fashioned skill with the comb and scissors.

Another bargain was bus service. While the Philadelphia Transportation Company and others throughout the U.S. were plugging for a twenty-cent fare in order to break even, Las Palmas buses were toting us—at a profit—four miles for 1<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub>¢.

Grand Canary was singularly blessed with a mineral spring in the village of Firgas. This is unquestionably the finest water I have tasted anywhere in the world. It's medicinal, but doesn't taste like medicine. It has minerals without hardness. It sparkles, for an ideal mixer with whiskey or gin or anis, yet is not a whit gassy. Better still, its sparkle is so firmly implanted that it stays put in an opened bottle for several days. We ordered it by the case through the little green store in the valley. Price: 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>¢ a quart.

Most of our food came from this little green store. It was

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open only seven days a week from seven in the morning until nine in the evenings. But the family that owned it lived in the back, so we could get in any time. They made no pretenses about orderliness. There were no eye-level displays—not even electric light to see them by. Fela did most of the buying, toting along one or more of the kids, whose main motive (we eventually discovered) was to cash in on a piece of free candy the storekeeper never failed to find. The day-to-day staples she asked for were generally to be found in a bag or a box over in a corner under a pile of other bags and boxes. Then they refilled her kerosene tin from a huge drum which lay on its belly in the back, and for 12¢ they gurgled a quart of very good red wine into her Dutch crock. The kids loved to watch this. The storekeeper set the crock on the stone floor, chocked it with a small funnel, wrestled a monstrous ten-gallon flask over his shoulder and hit the funnel with a long and deadly accurate stream.

For fresh produce, Fela visited the nearby farm from which she had already got our early morning milk at 10¢ a quart. There she picked up eggs at 45¢ a dozen, lemons at 6¢ to 12¢ a dozen, bananas at 3¢ a pound, apricots at 5¢, pears at 2¢, tomatoes at 2¢ and potatoes at 1¢. Most of this she carried up the hill in our American zipper beach bag, balanced on her head with a casual precision developed through a lifetime's practice. We were never able to threaten Fela's supremacy in this skill, though Barry tried hard for months. He conceded defeat, finally, saying that the bag "made his scalp wiggle."

I forget, now, if I mentioned earlier the electricity situation at Villa La Solana. There wasn't any. The wires were there, sticking out of the walls just as they had for years. But no one in the Angostura Valley was sufficiently sold on the benefits of electricity to want to pay the cost of bringing it there. Men

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came and measured the number of miles of wire it would take, but beyond that nothing ever happened.

Poor "Astral," the beautiful little refrigerator we'd carried all the way from New York, stood silently in a corner while we gradually and grudgingly grew accustomed to limp salads, tepid drinks, and today's leftovers *today*. All three quarts of the morning's milk had to be consumed by nightfall. Fresh meat from the valley's one steer and one calf, butchered on Thursday and sold only on Friday night, had to be cooked and eaten on Saturday. Fela had never known refrigeration, but she knew all the substitutes. Friday night she sprinkled salt and various mysterious spices over the raw meat, loaded it onto a dinner plate, inverted another plate on top, balanced the whole works on an inverted teacup which stood handle-deep in the middle of a bowl of water. This moat of water served not only to humidify the meat, but to isolate it from ants and vermin as well. Eggs needed no refrigeration either. As Fela picked up no more than a day's supply at a time, it was seldom that an egg lived more than twenty-four hours after leaving, the hen. Whenever she ran short in the middle of the day, Fela simply rang the bell for Andres and he'd invariably find a few lying around his chickenyard.

Grand Canary grows most of its own coffee. The farm we lived on had a dozen plants, enough to produce a year's supply for all branches of the family. The little green store sold coffee only in raw bean form, and each housewife roasted and ground her own. So we tried it—ugh! Some beans got burned, some stayed raw, and we couldn't tell by looking at them which was which. The only proof was to grind and brew—and ruin—an entire batch of coffee. Later we found stores in Las Palmas where we could buy the beans professionally roasted. The

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ultimate brew tasted passably good to me, but Katie—often in rare form before her morning coffee—thought it awful.

“Fela!” she called into the kitchen in English near the end of our second week, “bring us some of that poison from your witch’s cauldron.” Fela adored Katie. Though she knew no English, she could recognize this as a crack about the coffee and took it in the right spirit. She also knew that by local standards her coffee was good. She was right. In time we grew so fond of this throaty potion that when a shipping agent smuggled us a vacuum-packed can of America’s fastest-selling coffee we wondered how we could once have been so biased towards its weak-kneed flavor.

Despite intentions to the contrary, we found ourselves trying to shape Canario raw materials into familiar American dishes. One of our earliest blunders was a whirl at hamburgers. In Grand Canary, hamburger meat and ground round steak were unknown. But we bought the best boneless beef we could find, a shapeless hunk cleaved at random from a cadaverous carcass. Fela cut the meat into smallish slabs, Katie jammed them into a meat grinder that Columbus must have left there, Karen braced the chair that held the grinder and I wrestled with the balky crank. At first we blamed this wrestle less on gristle than grinder, but a few minutes’ silent chomping at the table put blame where it belonged. It was pitiful to see Katie’s face searching the circle of inclined heads for the approving nod that never came. She had even rounded out this Yankeeish meal with French fries and cole slaw, concocting mayonnaise from questionable ingredients and painfully shredding cabbage with the bread knife. Brian dealt the final blow. “Where,” he demanded, “are the hamburger rolls?”

Canarios *like* their beef lean and wiry. They protest streaks

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of fat which American housewives find vital to tenderness and flavor. This is a convenient preference, for it may be years before they'll be exposed to meat from a chunky corn-fed critter. Feed and pasturage on this dry volcanic island are so frighteningly expensive that it's cheaper to market four half-starved steers totaling 2000 pounds, than to glut three to the same weight.

Butchering, more side line than science, is nevertheless geared nicely to the buying public. Our Angostura butcher, by day the local schoolteacher, was chiefly interested in salvaging for his thrifty customers every last corpuscle of the cow. His shop was ghoulishly draped with lower-priced ears, tongues, lungs and tripe. So with this the main challenge to butchering it's not surprising that there's no organized effort to improve the breed.

Fish won us over by default. It was cheap, plentiful and delicious. Even the kids, who had made faces at fish for as long as we could remember, took to it with an attitude remotely resembling enthusiasm. Our regular fishman, dapper with trim mustache, black beret and striped diplomat's pants with holes in the knees, puffed up our road three or four times a week and announced his arrival by blowing on a big, scaly conch shell. This shell weighed exactly one kilogram, so he said, and was used as a weight on his very unprofessional-looking balance. He brought his freshly-caught, finny friends straight from the ocean on the early bus. His basket was covered for showmanship purposes with an old gunny sack. He and Fela and Katie stood on the patio making lots of chitchat over the relative merits and demerits of each kind of fish. None looked like anything we'd ever seen before and except for sardines none of their strange names appeared in our dictionary. Katie, with little more than an elementary diploma from the Ecole de Frozen Filets, tried to sound wise enough to avoid a rooking. But it's hard to know when you are fooling a fishmonger. He

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can size up your savvy even before you open your mouth. We eventually found we couldn't go wrong with *sama*. For ten cents we could buy enough for a whopping meal for all of us, plus a fish chowder meal the next day. This price included a sociable visit by our little beret-headed friend into the kitchen, where he cleaned the purchased fish, guillotined it and committed any other atrocities that would make the finished product easier to handle. Fela was a whiz at camouflaging the fish's head, bones and select innards to make a faceless chowder. Katie warned at the outset that if she ever came across fish eyes in her soup bowl Fela had better start running.

The two foods the kids missed most were Rice Krispies and peanut butter. Morning after morning they muttered side remarks to each other such as "What a country—no peanut butter!"

Finally Katie gave in. She bought ten pounds of locally-grown raw peanuts, had Fela roast them in the charcoal oven, then turned them over to the kids. "All right," she demanded, "if you want peanut butter so badly, shell these!"

Enthusiasm petered out at the end of the second pound, and the patio began to look like the bleachers at Franklin Field after a Penn-Army game, but four days and four-hundred reminders later the entire lot was shelled. Brian and Karen then put the peanuts through the meat grinder, Katie added salt and some Argentine peanut-and-sunflower oil. Barry mashed it into a paste. From the huge ten-pound bag of peanuts, and a prohibitive amount of child labor, emerged two pounds of peanut butter. It was not one bit homogenized, and something less than smooth, about the consistency of a mixture of brown gravel and axle grease. When it was gone no one asked for more.

Requests for dry cereals died out too, when the younger set discovered *GOFIO*: A strictly Canario food, *gofio* was mirac-

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ulously inexpensive and as versatile as old-fashioned horse liniment. Locally-grown corn was dried in the sun, toasted, then ground to a fine powder between huge stone grinding wheels. The kids ate it as cereal every morning for almost a year and never tired of its bewitching flavor. They mixed it with milk and sugar, with water and sugar, with whipped eggs and sugar, with smashed bananas. They spread it on bread, used it as a flavoring in soup—anything. Canarios include *gofio* in many of their favorite dishes. As an accessory to *sancochos*, the fish salad, it is pressed into a sort of cookie and eaten with the fingers. Fish are often rolled in it before frying. Sometimes it's stirred into a spicy sauce. However fixed, it's good, good, good!

Food, help and rent made up about three-quarters of our living costs. After all, there was no electricity, no telephone, no gas, no heating, no water bill, no sewer rental, no taxes, no doctor bills, no clothing, no toys, no car, no lots of things. Within a few days we stopped being surprised that no hot water came out of the *caliente* faucet. I had started shaving with cold water and bar soap in Marrakech, but had no intention of continuing until I saw Swedes, Germans, Frenchmen and Spaniards calmly doing the same in our Las Palmas hotel. To disabuse these folks of Americans' reputation for softness, I continued cold-water shaved in the Angostura until Fela began to spoil me with a strategically timed teakettle. Civilization steals into The Simple Life in many disguises. Even as a hot and cold running chambermaid.

In the main, during those early days, we kept costs down by letting nature rule. While Katie and I sat around and read, or strolled, or cat-napped, the kids wandered off barefoot and bareback to explore the wonders of their new world. Their discoveries so excited them that words fell all over one another in the telling. The valley walls were as peppered with holes as



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a priceless antique. Some were inhabited by cave dwellers, some were deserted, some were used for storage of feed or cactus trunks. Others housed goats or sheep or donkeys. In one, the kids found the skeleton of a huge dog.

The workings of the farms inspired them to reproduce one in miniature. They built complex irrigation systems, including catch basins, troughs, wells and pipelines. They built stone houses and barns and bridges and walls. They brought to life inanimate objects to pose as camels, donkeys, cows, goats and watchdogs. They even cultivated a "field" and planted cactus and seedling trees and pasture grass. Not once did they ask for a toy or manufactured equipment. Everything was dreamed up and made from existing raw materials they'd gathered on forays far and wide.

From one of these forays they returned with the tale of discovery of a "big swimming pool with frogs, tadpoles and lizards swimming in it." We realized at once that this must be one of the irrigation catch basins that dotted the country side. A rule was born. Future water sports were to be chaperoned.

The boys gave us another turn one afternoon when they climbed the 2000-foot mountain behind the villa. Katie had given them permission to retrace the route we'd all taken together the day before, but eight-year-old Barry's pioneer instincts led him to the top of a sixty-foot rock face. He proceeded to descend the face, calling instructions to Brian and to Craig who was not yet four. Katie and I were aroused from some banana-fied preoccupation when we heard an outburst of shouting. Perturbed valley people were calling a hundred-and-one bits of well-meant advice in Spanish to the unperturbed boys. We silenced them, with much difficulty and thanks, and megaphoned an order to stand fast. Katie, muttering something about the boys' taking after their mountaineer father, circled

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around to the top of the cliff. I started up the bottom, and before long we joined hands. Katie, puffing in a very unladylike manner, was first to reach them.

"Hi Mom," greeted the three-year-old alpinist, "why aren't you smiling?"

My arrival saved Craig a blistering reply. Katie looked at me weakly. "Your witness, Colonel Hunt," she sighed. "Today they're *your* children."

"I'm proud you were so calm and sure-footed," I said, "but ask Dad to go along after this—okay?"

"Sure—swell—okay."

At first, the children of the Angostura showed far more interest in our kids than vice versa. They had seen elderly foreign tourists groaning up the valley road in taxis, but foreign *kids* were a real eye-popper. They huddled around by the dozen, staring and commenting and eventually asking questions which ours could not understand. Some reached out to feel the denim of the American jeans. The rest seemed content to stand and stare for an eternity. Our kids chafed under this unearned attention and began clowning with each other. This guaranteed a growing audience, and the more senseless the antics the bigger the crowd. Eight or ten teen-age girls put down their sewing and emerged from a room in the little green store. They chucked the boys' chins, ran their fingers through Karen's long blond hair, patted Brian's smooth brown cheeks. One picked up Craig and began to hug him.

"Put me down," he yelled, in genuine alarm. He squirmed frantically and the big girls giggled with delight. The crowd of small boys laughed and chattered and continued to stare.

"Let go of Craig," shouted Barry angrily. He tugged at the girl's hands and Craig broke away. Just then Fela came out of the store and our kids joined her to climb back to the villa. The

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girls went back to their sewing, but the boys trailed along, still chattering and staring.

Barry's eyes grew wet with bewildered frustration. "Why don't you go *do* something!" he called over his shoulder—still in English—through quivering lips.

Fela didn't fully understand, but sensed trouble and shooed the pack back down the road. Our kids ran into the courtyard and slammed the big oaken gate behind them. Barry's lips were still quivering when he reached us. "I don't like the kids over here!" he said, blinking back the tears. "They don't understand anything. They don't *do* anything except stare at us and laugh at us. And the girls are all the time touching us!"

The other three piled protest on protest. Katie and I exchanged looks with a shrug of despair, our hopes of UN-style concord in the valley dashed cruelly on the rocks of misunderstanding.

"Look, kids," I pointed out, "the only way you're going to learn Spanish is to talk with everyone around here—and to play their way. As soon as you can talk their language you'll like them better and find out a lot about them."

"I don't *want* to find out about 'em," said Brian, "they're all raggedy."

"You'll be raggedy, to, after a little while," said Katie firmly. "This volcanic rock is tough on clothes, and the ones we brought from America have to last us all year."

But with the inconsistency of youth, our little critics were equally delighted with other facets of Canario life. Living in a cave had great appeal, and Barry talked about moving the whole family into one. "Wouldn't have to pay money to live there," he explained with very unusual practicality, "and the kids could play in the house and not wreck anything. We could even have goats and things living in there with us."

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"I'll give you just one night in a cave with a goat," laughed Katie.

"Phewee," said Karen, holding her nose and walking off, "don't you see what they do in the streets?" This, indeed, had been one of the intriguing facets. In place of aluminum-capped bottles of milk delivered to townsfolks' doors by a white-uniformed Sealtest man, goats with pendulous udders that swung through the refuse of other goats wandered from door to door to be milked directly into each housewife's container. This, of course, is common practice in many countries of the world. But to children who had seen model barns and TV films of model dairy procedure, and who had had cleanliness drilled into them since birth, this goat operation was almost incomprehensible.

The relaxed attitude of non-Americans toward life's natural functions again found expression during the procession of Corpus Christi, performed solemnly and magnificently in the Grand Canary town of Telde. The main street, steep and winding, was paved with beautiful multicolored designs which had been executed in flower petals. In the wake of the deeply moving procession, just as some of the watchers were drying their eyes, a Canario boy about the age of Huckleberry Finn initiated a liberal trickle in the middle of the street just upstream of the design of the Blessed Sacrament. Our kids looked on with righteously indignant fascination.

"Mommie-e, look what he's do-eeng!" shrieked Craig, outbaddied for once. While Katie shrank into the pavement, the rest of the populace seemed little disturbed by the boy's act. To the contrary, they watched with the sporting enthusiasm of roulette players as the stream wriggled its mischievous way toward the sacred floral piece. Fortunately for all, it was diverted at last by a charitable crack in the asphalt.

The social lifeblood of our Angostura neighbors was the

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Golden Bus. It made three trips a day from Las Palmas, climbing as high as our post office at Santa Brigida village, waiting for passengers to transact a bit of business or get a haircut, then returning the way it had come. The route was nine miles of informal blacktop which twisted through a scenic wonderland of mountains, farms, chasms, cave dwellers, *gofio* mills, donkey carts, sleeping dogs and smiling people who invariably stood in the path of the bus. Though this nine miles could be covered in twenty-five minutes by an impatient car, the bananafied bus took about an hour. Its driver, who looked like Lon Chaney, and its conductor, who looked like Howard Hughes, knew intimately every resident of the valley. They knew, for instance, that the Angostura village cobbler (who looked like our dentist in Wayne, Pennsylvania) was certain to be city-bent for leather every Monday morning. If he wasn't waiting in the road they'd stop and yell for him. They also knew they could expect a lot of squawking on Friday, the day many passengers brought aboard a live, marketable chicken or two. Bicycles, laundry bundles, feed bags, lumber and anything else too big to squeeze through the door, they tossed up on the roof. They performed innumerable personal services, like delivering notes, hollering to wives that husbands would be late and leaving unaccompanied wine jugs on doorsteps. They stopped anywhere—just say the word. They waited for late-comers without impatience. They even stopped to let a passenger speak for a few moments to a pedestrian. If you didn't have your fare you could bring it tomorrow, or send it by a friend. With all this relaxed attitude toward schedule, the Golden Bus kept surprisingly close to one. Folks set their watches by it—a few minutes one way or the other being of no consequence in this life. Others, lacking radios or newspapers, managed to meet it at a probable stop and pick up the news. Our first ride on the

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Golden Bus not only helped us to meet our island neighbors, it gave us time to make sense out of statistics and the island's physical character as well. Grand Canary (30 miles by 40 miles) is the most populous of the seven principal islands in the Canary archipelago, though neighboring Teneriffe (25 miles by 60 miles) is slightly larger. Together, these two account for four-fifths of the group's total population which in 1955 was estimated at over 800,000. Most of these are native Canarios and Spaniards from The Peninsula. Foreign population, mainly English, but including a sampling from all over the earth, numbers less than two thousand.

Grand Canary is a climatic freak. It sits in a sort of cusp between the cool trade winds from the Azores and the hot winds from the Sahara, with the Gulf Stream acting as moderator. Through this unique circumstance, the Trades win out in summer, the Sahara in winter, and the year-round result is a climate that would delight a lazy weather forecaster. Sometimes rain fails to fall for months on end, and when it does it's usually not for long. Total annual rainfall for Las Palmas, for instance, is only seven inches—about the same as Phoenix, Arizona; one-sixth as much as Philadelphia; one-eighth as much as Miami. Annual average temperature is 70 degrees, again the same as Phoenix, but contrasted to 55 in Philadelphia and 75 in Miami. January average is 65 and July 75, against 51 and 90 for Phoenix, 33 and 77 for Philadelphia, 68 and 82 for Miami. The air is generally crisp and dry, making any reasonable temperature quite tolerable. Many people have said good-bye to asthma here. Barry, who had a mild but mysterious respiratory allergy when we arrived, felt his breathing grow smoother and more effortless as the year passed.

Even one who is bewildered by figures can see that this climate is not "tropical" and would not induce the indolence of

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the lotus lands. Instead, it keeps the body close to 100 per cent efficiency the year around, with none of the knot-tying cold and stupefying steam heat of winter nor the enervating perspiration of summer. This makes Canarios, in my opinion, *less* lazy on the average than Americans, and has an important bearing on their entire approach to life. Apparently it affected the ancients in much the same way, for Homer and other Greek poets and utopian thinkers called the Canaries "The Fortunate Isles," "The Elysian Fields" and "The Garden of Hesperides." Later, this never-never land of the classics was thought to contain the mountain tops of the sunken kingdom of Atlantis. Legend such as this seems to have replaced record throughout Canary history. Even today one finds accounts exceedingly short on fact and long on impression. It is believed that Phoenicians visited the islands, presumably in the ninth century B.C., though they left no record. Homer's *Odyssey* mentions a vague but wonderful discovery by Sesostris, far beyond (700 miles) the Pillars of Hercules (Gibraltar). Romans learned of the islands from Mauretania's King Juba in 40 B.C. and it was Pliny who immortalized their canine fighters by first writing the name *Insulae Canariensis*.

Carthaginians, Arabs, Portuguese and Genoese sailors all explored the islands, but it was not until 1482 when the Spanish conquered the *Guanche* natives and introduced civilization as we know it. Ten years later, Columbus stopped at Las Palmas to repair the *Pinta's* broken rudder and lay in stocks of provisions. Despite stories of boiled rope and stewed rat which dot the history books, Canarios believe it was the produce of their fabulously fertile volcanic soil that kept the Admiral of the Ocean Seas alive until the dawn of discovery. In appreciation, he returned with the Indian maize which was to give rise to Grand Canary's wonderful *gofio*, and tomato seed which in-

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roduced the crop which has today become second only to bananas in importance.

Although the king and many of his *Guanche* subjects jumped into the sea to escape mistreatment at the hands of the Spanish conquerors, the two peoples have made out very well together. While elsewhere in the world power and possessions have been changing hands as fast as face cards in a game of gin rummy, the Canaries have remained steadfastly Spanish for almost five centuries. The *Guanches* left no written record of any kind, but skulls in the Las Palmas museum suggest that most of them were once part of the *real* ancient Iberian civilization, when everybody lived in caves and when one could walk across the straits of Gibraltar without getting his feet wet. If the Atlantis myth is true, there may also have been land bridges between Grand Canary and Africa. Thus Canarios, Moors and Spaniards may once have been one big happy family.

Primitive as they were, through a European's eye, the *Guanches* had skills and culture of their own. The artistry of their mummifying rivaled the Egyptians'. They sewed deftly with bone needles, a skill their descendants have carried down into the steel age. They pioneered an art of pottery making which is followed to this day. Through all distinction between *Guanches* and Spaniards dissolved in the intermarriage of centuries it's probably fair to say that today's Canarios are a people apart from the visitors from peninsular Spain. They are a happy blend of the serenity, industriousness and trustful directness of the *Guanches* with the dignity, independence, chivalry and hospitality of the Spanish.

When Katie and I made our first trip to Las Palmas on the Golden Bus, we felt the restrained warmth of this blend. Toward us there was not the frank friendliness of Americans. Nor the ebullient camaraderie of Bavarians. Nor the gay embrace of



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Italians. We were on probation for telltale signs (as we discovered later) of untranslatable *simpático* or *antipático* characteristics. If it became clear that we were agreeable and could see things their way, we would be labeled *simpático*. If not, heaven help us, we would be *antipático*, and the only place in Grand Canary for this label was on a homeward-bound suitcase.

This particular day, just a week after moving into Villa La Solana, was the day Katie faced her first foreign market—alone. I wanted to see the landlord about a few things so I said, “See you on the afternoon bus.”

Katie looked aghast. “You’re not *leaving* me, are you?”

“Sure,” I said, “we *both* can’t do market and landlord and catch the Golden Bus.”

“But I can’t do this alone! I want you with me.”

This seemed utterly unreasonable. Here’s the thirty-three-year-old mother of four children, veteran of many stormy shopping days in New York, Detroit and Philadelphia, squirming at the thought of tackling the market place of little old Las Palmas. She could find her way underground from Times Square to Grand Central. She had even been a Henry Street public health nurse, intrepidly entering strange, dark houses in New York’s most questionable districts. This turn of the mind was just too ridiculous. I left her alone.

Katie, a victim of the overcompensation of emancipated American womanhood, wandered into this noisily bubbling cauldron of strange sights and sounds. She first strode through the fruit market, trying to melt into the crowd as if she’d been shopping there for twenty years. She was about as inconspicuous as Abe Lincoln playing the pinball machines in Times Square. Commission merchants hooted at her from behind huge baskets of oranges, apricots, guavas and cactus pears. Wherever

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she stopped a crowd of customers gathered around her, studied her dress and bent an ear to discern her accent. All of her months of studying Spanish seemed to dissolve to nothing. The strange coins and banknotes puzzled her, and the merchants—instead of expressing all prices in *pesetas* and *céntimos*—used unmarked, unheard-of terms like *duros*, *perras* and *medias-perras*. Later, she found that these corresponded to U.S. terms like fins, dimes and nickels. Imagine walking into an American market and being asked for seventeen nickels, or three fins. Before she knew it she had a five-pound melon in her arms and was being osmosed into the enormous, white-tiled fish market. She moved from one screaming vendor to another, dodging the big dripping fish they swung demonstratively before her eyes, averting her glance as bloody gills were yanked open to prove freshness. When she ventured a hesitant, awkwardly-constructed question, the vendor's reply was a smashing blow to the head—of the fish. Another had a giant, ugly-looking brute half-deguttled before she could stop him. Several more fish lay mutilated in her path before she picked her vendor. He had the nicest smile. He spoke slowly and clearly. He had no other customers to kibitz on her purchase. He got her money, and off she marched with four pounds of *cherne*.

In the imported staple department, the men who smiled at her through a curtain of stalagmitic sausages and stalactitic pyramids of margarine found that she paid the asking price and fell all over each other for the privilege of collecting it. One man demolished a two-foot tower of jam cans in order to catch her eye.

There were stalls for general merchandise, too, and in one she bought a large rubber ball for Craig's birthday, a fly swatter and an orange squeezer. She found a tinsmith's stall where a boy promised to make a lid for the teakettle if she would

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bring it and a No. 2½ tin can. It turned out to be a splendid piece of work—with a tight fit, handle and all—and cost five cents.

Katie stopped last at the fringe of a crowd around a mind-reader who could tell, while blindfolded, just what people were wearing or carrying. It was when the mind-reader identified the melon in Katie's arms that she realized how her arms ached. She had only a vague idea where the bus depot was located and wasn't sure exactly how to ask for it, but eventually found it with a minimum of detours. Lon Chaney gave her a kind nod from the driver's seat. Howard Hughes relieved her of the bundles and set them in a corner. With arms dangling from their sockets and participles dangling from their nouns, she slumped into a seat.

Then I arrived with a pocketful of promises from the landlord. "Hi!" I said, "have fun?"

Early the next day, landlord and landlady arrived with carpenter, plumber, materials and tools to fulfill the promises. They were a charming couple, she bright-eyed and beautiful, he tall and distinguished, both descended from important and titled Spanish families. He had the looks, as well as the library and position of a man of learning. Aquiline nose; large, gentle, gray eyes; graying temples and a graciousness and easy correctness of manner that you couldn't pick up in a five-foot shelf of etiquette books. One afternoon, much later in our stay on Grand Canary, he came upon us when we were having a drink with a local acquaintance who had separated from an unfaithful wife and was now living with a faithful mistress. Divorce is illegal in Spain, and though society cheers the man who separates from such a wife it shuns just as vigorously any other woman who presumes to take her place. Our landlord bowed and smiled

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and joined us at the table for a polite interval but would not take a drink, even of water, though the day was hot and his spirit normally quite willing. This expressed in a quiet but deadly manner a gentleman's disapproval. And our landlord, people of all stations were quick to point out, was a true gentleman.

His wife looked much younger than her middle years. Her taste in clothes, as in the decorating and furnishing of Villa La Solana, was a blend of originality and austerity. Her clear, white complexion, set off by soft, dark hair, would be the envy of women of all countries. When asked, she said she used neither cosmetics nor skin lubricants nor even hot water. Cold water and soap was her simple formula. As she had lived some years in Villa La Solana, this should have tipped us off for the aquacade that followed. But it didn't.

The work party patched and improvised and nailed and glued with a spirit of thrift that made Ben Franklin look like a Five Percenter on an expense account. Nothing they brought was new. The tablecloths had big darns in them. Three normal-size napkins had been cut in half and hemmed to provide the required six. The mechanic soldered bits of scrap metal onto the lamps. The carpenter shored up a cupboard door with splinters of boxwood. Broken glass from large windows was recut to fit needy small ones. Suddenly the landlady came across Craig digging in the dirt with a rusted, twisted piece of metal.

"Goodness!" she said, "that is a brace for a bed!" There was a note of critical concern in her voice.

We had no idea the little scrap had value. Even the bolt holes had been broken out. "I'm sorry," I said, "do you think you can still use it?"

"But of course!" she replied, as if I had questioned the strength of the Golden Gate bridge. The mechanic spent an

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hour straightening it, redrilling it and scraping off the rust, and an hour more redrilling the bed and making the crumbly thing fit. It was the kind of brace you can buy for a quarter at almost any American hardware store. But not for the equivalent in non-industrial Spain. Lots cheaper to wrestle with the old one for a couple of hours.

Then they tackled the water system. American master plumbers, I once read somewhere, have launched a publicity campaign to prove to the public that they are not procrastinating, time-stretching, by-guess-and-by-gosh scoundrels after all. How true. Our American plumbers are jet-propelled geniuses compared to the boys who mañana-ed around with La Solana's water system. Even "bananafied" is an excessively dynamic term to apply to that operation.

Canarios call their water "liquid gold." It's an apt term, for the water might as well be in Fort Knox when you set out to get some piped to your house. Like the gas tanks in a used car lot, our cistern, the day we moved in, could not be called "empty." A pail on a rope would fetch a smitch. The pump, however, sucked frantically at the moist masonry and promptly gave out with a glurk.

"The cistern," announced Andres brilliantly, "is a little low on water."

"Well," I said, with a baronial sweep of the hand, "please see that it gets filled."

"Ah, Señor," replied Andres with a benign smile, "such big questions are beyond the power of little Andres." This proved one of the keys to Andres' enviable contentment. Despite his three score years, he would tackle any physical job, and any simple manual job with which he was completely familiar. "Ah yes, Andres knows!" he would say with a cocked head and wink. But if confronted by a project requiring mental or-

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ganization or original thinking or learning a new skill, he was "little Andres."

He explained that I should speak to the landlord, who would write to the manager of the farm. I later found that the chain did not end there. The farm manager then had to speak to the director of the water cooperative, who would speak to the man at the rainwater reservoir in the high mountains, who would turn a valve which would cause water to flow for a certain number of hours in our direction. A man on our farm would then divert this water into a swimming-pool-like storage tank on the mountainside above us.

From here, the "liquid gold" was supposed to scurry down to our underground cistern through an open concrete trough. Trouble was, this trough had been broken in two places by falling rocks. This took three days to repair and when the cistern was full at last we peered in to discover that the precious stuff was neither gold nor transparent but the color of a pot of weak cocoa.

"Dirty? This is not dirt," said Andres with the look of an inside dopester, "it's just silt."

"But our dishes are *white*," Katie entreated calmly, "and what happens when we take a bath in this?"

"We're getting so tanned," said Barry, "that it won't make any difference."

"Next time we set out for The Simple Life," said Katie, "remind me first to dye all our clothes brown."

Andres said that most of the silt would settle within a few weeks, and if we wanted to rush the process there was a chemical—he couldn't recall the name—that could be bought in Las Palmas—he didn't know which store.

"Let's relax," I suggested. "Maybe we can tie strainers on the faucets."

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"Sure," sighed Katie, "*that's* relaxing."

But it was to be a while before anything reached the faucets. Even with all this water the pump still wouldn't work. The landlord's plumber arrived first without enough tools, again without enough parts, then had to hand-turn some new bushings in a shop in Santa Brigada. More days passed.

"Hooray," everybody cried as water could at last be heard splashing into the gravity *deposito* atop our rockery. Andres filled it with five hours of arduous pumping, and with Barry and Brian taking short stints from time to time. Just as the *deposito's* valve was about to be turned the kids peeped into the *deposito* itself and called out "Hey—it's full of junk!"

"What kind of junk?" I asked, scaling the rockery in record time.

"Sticks, leaves, pine needles and dirt."

I shoed them away and began fishing for debris. Suddenly my hand touched something furry. Up came a dead rat. That was enough. I could envision Katie climbing aboard the next plane to the United States. "Andres!" I shouted.

He buried the rat quietly and privately in a dry river bed and spent the rest of the day emptying and cleaning the *deposito*. Again he pumped it full, but still the end was not in sight. He then found that the *deposito* valve and two of the faucets leaked. Again the plumber, who cut washers and collars from the side of an old shoe.

I cornered both Andres and the plumber on the patio. "Look here, you experts," I said, looking them in the eye like a football coach between halves, "wouldn't it save you both a lot of time and trouble if you were to double-check all the plumbing before leaving here today? Then you won't have to come again."

"It's nothing," shrugged Andres, "I don't mind calling the plumber. He's an old friend."

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"I am quite used to coming up here," said the plumber. "When the Swiss artists lived here I even used to bring my wife up to see the view from the arbor. Just tell Andres when you need me."

The next morning Fela—who had been doing all the cooking on a one-burner Primus pump stove—fired up the charcoal monster. Katie and I were sitting in the patio, elbow-deep in Somerset Maugham and Daphne du Maurier.

"*Nothing* is going to disturb me today!" I said firmly, "These people can fight their own battles."

"Would it disturb you, master, if the villa burned down?" Katie waved a hand toward the kitchen. Sure enough, smoke was pouring out the kitchen window. More, in fact, than was coming out of the chimney.

"Ignore it," I said, and pressed on with the story. But it was a losing battle. I could *feel* Fela approaching from the kitchen.

"Señorita?" she called, rubbing the smoke-tears from her eyes.

It was the custom of Canario domestics to so address the mistress of the house, and it never failed to please Katie. "Makes me feel ten years younger," she told me once. "I can just see myself as an unmarried Spanish girl standing on a balcony . . . dark hair, olive skin without freckles, folds of a fine black mantilla touching my *red* dress." (Like many of the titian-haired set, she'd never dared to wear red.) "And you down below, singing to me and playing a guitar."

"Señorita," called Fela again, "the stove refuses to pass its smoke."

"Then ask Andres to clean the chimney," Katie suggested.

Fela started to say something else, checked herself and disappeared. Andres arrived with ladder and a rope with palm fronds tied to the end of it. He jerked this up and down the



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flue, looking like a fisherman whose line is hooked on a piling. Then Fela reappeared.

"The smoke is now worse," she announced. The tone in her voice suggested that Katie was largely responsible.

"Fela," said Katie with an expert Canario spread of her hands, "I know nothing at all about Canary stoves and hot water systems. You solve it in your own way."

"Very well," said Fela, "I will heat for the Señorita a tea-kettle of hot water on the Primus."

"Whoa," laughed Katie. "Wouldn't it be easier to get the charcoal stove working right, and have hot water heated *automatically* all day long?"

"I never heard of anybody doing it that way," Fela said. "It would take a horrible lot of charcoal. If the Señorita just tells me when she wants hot water, I'll heat it for her on the Primus."

"But I want it *all* the time," said Katie. "There are six faucets in this house marked '*caliente*' and I'd like to be able to turn on any one of them—any time—and have hot water come out."

"Oh Señorita!" Fela smiled her Mona Lisa smile.

"Look Fela," I said, unable to keep still any longer, "did Andres clean the stove as well as the chimney?"

"No Señor, he never comes into the kitchen."

"Oy, no wonder, all the soot he swept down the chimney is sitting in the stove. Ask him to finish his job."

"Yes, Señor."

A few minutes later Andres doffed his hat and bowed onto the patio. "Will the gentleman excuse me? I know nothing about the inside of stoves, but I'll send a message tonight to my friend the plumber. He will then come tomorrow night when he finishes work in Santa Brigida."

"Andres," I said, "tomorrow night is two full days from now. We want hot water *now*. I don't know anything about these

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stoves either, but I think both of us can find out in ten minutes." I arose, pulled off my polo shirt, and headed for the kitchen. "Let's go."

Andres smiled, gave one of his subtle half-shrugs and followed. We disassembled the stove, removed a basketful of soot and within an hour the stove was burning hot and clean. By midafternoon, Fela reported a tankful of hot water.

Katie was jubilant. "Baths in the bathtub tonight!" she called to the kids. They did not comment. At six we tried the "*caliente*" faucet in the kitchen. It ran and ran and ran—still cold. Fela turned on the "*fria*" faucet. It ran warm. Then we tried the bathtub. Both faucets ran cold. Same with the shower.

Craig stood watching the cold hot water run down the shower drain. "Where does that water go?" he asked.

"Into an irrigation *deposito*," I said.

"Then where?"

"Then down into the ground."

"Does it rain on the devil?"

Katie glanced at me from the corner of her eye, then drew our little four-year-old into her skirts. "No, Sweetie," she said "but *somebody* must be enjoying a shower with our hot water."

"Señorita!" called Fela from the kitchen, "the hot water is now finished. The tank is suddenly cold."

Katie and I sat on the edge of the bathtub and grew weak with laughter. "You just can't beat the system," gasped Katie, "there must be pixies in the pipes."

Thus ended our first and last attempt to operate the hot water system at Villa La Solana. On a later visit, the landlord and landlady expressed surprise that it had not worked. They couldn't recall a time when it had, but this didn't mean it *wouldn't*. The four of us were sitting in the arbor and admiring the view.

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"What do you propose to do about it?" I asked, pouring a second gin-and-Firgas all around.

"Don't worry yourself another minute," said the landlord, with his smooth, resonant voice and masterful calm. "Just ask Andres to call the plumber."

Succeeding days were gloriously relaxing for me, full of new surprises and experiences for the kids, but a mixture of ups and downs for Katie. The new life reduced her functions in a proportion of about ten to one. After the first few days of resting off the effects of her recent torrential year, wheels began to spin and there was an occasional sound of clashing gears as she tried to shift from high into compound low. While I was content to putter around the yard, climb mountains, explore the river bed with the kids, or just sit in the arbor and bury myself in a book for hours on end, Katie felt we should be doing something more significant. Something like sightseeing around the island, taking in more village fiestas, doing more swimming, learning more Spanish. Sightseeing, swimming and distant fiestas were almost out of the question with the Angostura's hen's-tooth bus schedule. This left her to the study of Spanish, which she pursued relentlessly and successfully, with drill book, dictionary and verb wheel, to the benefit of all of us.

I drifted more and more back to writing. Like the retired boxer who can't stay away from the fights, I felt a compelling urge to get thoughts down on paper. Every new discovery looked like a first-rate magazine article. Conditions for writing were both stimulating and distracting. I met an Italian ex-sea captain who had married a Canario and settled down to manage our farm. His life story was so fabulous and moving that I decided to write it, just to see how fairly an anti-fascist could present the case of an intensely loyal pro-fascist. His name,

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Eugenio Camalich, was a trade-mark of the region of Trieste where Austrian rulers had once imposed Germanic suffixes on Italian names. Before the "ch" was added, the Camoli family had lived as Italians in the oldest independent nation in Europe, the Republic (Dogedom, Kingdom) of Venice. The deeper I got into this story the more appalling appeared my deficient knowledge of the last fifteen centuries of Southern European history. Spider-webbing through translations of Eugenio's Italian references, and through French and English texts from our landlord's library, I came across dozens of significant facts and interpretations which had been missing entirely from my American schoolbooks. It was a new experience to research and read and write without pressure. For the first time, I honestly didn't care whether a piece of work ever got finished or published.

Photography, too, benefited from this new-found leisure. I began to pay attention to details of composition and characterization there had never been time for before. Everything about our life, and lives of others around us, looked like prize-winning picture material. The weather was fantastically cooperative with day after day of bright, clear, fresh sunshine. My year's stock of film vanished in two months. I sent to Germany for an additional camera that cost so much Katie called it her "forgotten mink."

Competing with these activities was an exorbitant amount of letter writing. Several times we called a halt to it, just to be spurred on by a truly stirring letter from home. It's easy to see why letter writing was so highly developed in Boswell's day. It was the telephone, motorcar and airplane. Perhaps even more. A good letter, written in an atmosphere of relaxation, can be more satisfying than a hurried visit, can even bear fantastic

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evidence of friendship such as "please let us take over your four children for a few weeks!"

A gruelling test, to be sure, but in Grand Canary we soon made friends who offered to do just that. It all started on a day in July when I met Arturo Lenton. His family, and the related families of Leon and Massieu, were to adopt us and transform us from outsiders to insiders in the life of the island—and to some extent in the life of Spain itself.

It happened at a miraculous moment. Just a few nights before, a wave of homesickness had swept Villa La Solana. A couple of wonderful letters from neighbors in Haddonfield had been read aloud to all the kids and Barry's face took on a strange expression.

"I'm homesick," he announced with quivering lips.

"How does it feel?" asked Katie, choking back her own tears.

"All funny inside," said Barry and his weeping fountained full and unashamed.

Karen broke down and said she was lonesome for Patsy, Marylee, Jacquie and Gail.

Brian said he missed the backyard games with Roger and Steve, and mixing pretend-poisons with Denny.

Craig said that Peter (the biggest and burliest kid in the block) probably wouldn't push him down any more. With that, all four broke down anew. Ignoring completely the bloody knees and noses of yore, they agreed with great glad tears that Peter was certainly the epitome of fairness and gentleness.

No sooner did this crisis blow off in the night when we faced another in the tragedy of Peeper Heidseck. He was the lovable duckling Katie and Brian discovered in the market place in Las Palmas. Why the name? Well, it was one of those things that grows out of conversation. Someone said, "he peeps all

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the time." Someone else remarked that he was the color of champagne. And since Katie and I had been toasted Farewell on a blissful cloud of Piper Heidseck champagne—presto the name.

He was an exceptional duckling. Though he joined the family at the wobbly age of three days he made an immediate hit with all and his untimely death at age ten days seemed the most maddeningly unfair event of the year.

"What's wrong with God?" demanded Karen, with tears raining down her face, "why does he put rats on earth that would kill little duckies?"

It had not been God's fault, but the fault of two of his careless children, meaning Katie and me. Peeper, after enduring without protest a day's well-meaning torment at the hands of all four kids, had just taken his last dip in the courtyard pool before turning in for the night. Katie and I tucked in the kids, and out of the corner of our ears we could hear Peeper calling for entry at the courtyard door. Karen had closed the outside gate to night-prowling dogs, and as she kissed Katie good-night she said, "Please, Mommie, let Peeper in. It's getting too dark for him to be out there all by his little self."

Katie, her mind crowded with a baker's dozen bedtime details, said, "sure, Karen, sure."

"Promise . . . Mommie?"

"Yes, I promise." And with that she closed the door on the little mind whose last womanly worry had been put to rest.

After a chore or two we settled down to writing letters by the light of an oil lamp in the living room. Suddenly we stared at each other with a sticky apprehension. The peeping had stopped. With lantern and empty heart we searched the courtyard from end to end. In the deep grass at one corner we found the fuzzy remains.

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Brian conducted the burial, the next morning, with a paper bag as the coffin, while Karen wept and Barry and Craig talked the brave talk of vengeance. Later in the day Katie returned on the Golden Bus with a successor to Peeper Heidseck. The kids named him Franco, because he was born on July 18, the day of Spain's liberation from the toils of the old government of the popular front.

Franco's arrival helped to squash the misery of Peeper's death, but the fear of rats loomed large in the minds of all. Early every evening a trap was set outside and Franco was bedded down in a box in the living room. Even in the daytime he was watched like a millionaire's child after a ransom note. But this was not enough. The trap was sprung and the bait stolen without harm to the wily bandit. Then in the middle of his eighth night with us, Franco was slaughtered *right there in our living room*. The intruder had had to enter and pass through the master bedroom to do his wicked work.

The next night no one wanted to go to bed until windows were locked, prayers said, lamps left alight and suitable weapons left bristling by every pillow. Even then a cry went up to remove the big, scary crucifixes from the rooms. We did. A terrible pall of insecurity hung over the house.

No sooner had Katie and I got our unstrung quartet soothed for the night, and ourselves settled uneasily into a big chair with a book, when a low scratching sound came from the blackness beyond the pale yellow circle of our oil lamp. I pretended not to hear it, and though Katie said nothing I could sense an instant slacking of her attention to the book. A pause, then the scratching returned, louder and more persistent. I felt Katie's muscles tighten.

"A friend of yours?" she asked. The scratching, now accompanied by a deeper gnawing, reminded me of a TV thriller

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about the world coming to an end, when the only two humans left on earth were faced by a growing army of animals. Only difference, the sound effects man would have been fired for making sounds as unreal as those at our door.

"Get out, you beast!" I shouted, in a voice sufficiently loud, I hoped, to startle him, and sufficiently ludicrous to reawaken my wife's sense of humor. It did neither. The awful noise was now echoing through the villa, and there was no mistaking Katie's alarm. I armed myself with flashlight and meat mallet and headed through the dining room to the source of the sound. Whatever it was, it was *already* in the house, trying to chew its way through the flimsy door which led from an unoccupied maid's room to the dining room. I opened the door with a sharp shove, felt something thump against it, entered and closed it behind me just as quickly. Searching for another entry I found the head-high bathroom window open. I closed it and turned to face the intruder. It was a huge rat, head and body a good ten inches long with an even longer tail lashing about like a warden's whip. I lunged at him, and for a quarter of an hour the two of us went at it—over and under the beds, behind night tables, in and out of closets, his lithe body dodging my wildly swinging meat mallet and his beady eyes gleaming defiantly into the beam of the flashlight. Gradually I drove him into the smaller, less-cluttered bathroom and closed the door behind me. With fantastic agility he shinnied the water pipe above the toilet and disappeared into the maze of tubes and levers atop the water level in the ceiling-high toilet reservoir. I filled a chamber pot with water from the washbowl and poured it into the reservoir. This raised the level but brought neither sound nor movement from the darkness. I added another potful, and as the reservoir began to overflow the rat suddenly reappeared and took an aerial leap at my face. I dodged, felt his feet claw away from



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my shoulder and wheeled with a baseball swing as he leaped a third time from a wall ledge. This connected. A second blow to the floor smashed his head. He took one last angry look at me, quivered and died.

I stood there staring at him for a while. I don't know how long. My arms hung limp—the flashlight beam betraying my shaking hand, the meat mallet dripping blood on my Keds. I set down the flashlight and felt the wet spot where the rat had hit my shoulder. Somehow he stood for the disquieting technical difficulties beyond our control that were distorting the big picture of idyllic happiness in Grand Canary. Nobody had caught me hiding the rat I'd found floating in our water *deposito*, but I was determined not to hide *this* one. I returned to the living room where Katie was standing stiff and still. She took one look at the mallet and relaxed against my dry shoulder.

The next morning I arose before the kids, pulled them from their beds and led them to the scene of the battle. They stared open-mouthed for a moment, followed the blood spatters that radiated from both blows, then asked intelligent, private-eye-like questions. We went over every detail of the battle. This took about twenty minutes. At the end they looked up with what seemed a new expression. We held a funeral after breakfast. Brian (our Charles Addams child) handled the interment and marked the grave with a straight stick “. . . not a cross, of course!” he said. From that moment, none of them spoke with fear of a rat, though we poisoned and buried seventeen more. Karen stopped worrying about “wolves and foxes” coming into her window at night. All gained strength in the conviction that man, after all, is king of the beasts.

Somehow this event chiseled our family brand into the masonry of Villa La Solana. No one ever again talked of homesickness.

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Then Arturo Lenton entered our lives. And with him the great sprawling family which gradually took us to their hearts and converted us from visitors to residents of Grand Canary. I met him in his shipping office while stopping for directions to some place in the Port of Las Palmas. Though I asked in Spanish, he sized me up for nationality and replied in flawless English, dropping in by way of compliment a couple of snappy American idioms. He was about my age, with a friendly, direct look, a warm smile, a small and casually-trimmed mustache. Ninety per cent of Canary's men are purported to have mustaches. You get so that you can tell a lot about a man from the way he trims and wears and fidgets with his. Arturo's was unostentatious and unfussed with, and that's when I began to like him.

"I'm just leaving to go your way myself," he said. "Hop in and I'll run you over." We climbed into his 1933 Opel sedan and he stepped on the starter. It went "wrrumph" and stopped. I jumped out and pushed until the motor started. As I climbed back in beside him, Arturo clapped me on the shoulder and extended his hand. "You're the first fellow who's got right out to push," he said, "instead of just offering and sitting there!"

"Your starter has given trouble before?" I asked.

His eyes twinkled. "It hasn't worked in weeks." he said. "As they say in the movies—brother, you've been taken!"

We exchanged the usual information, he revealing that he had visited Villa La Solana several times and that his wife's brother, Gregorio Leon, was married to one of the daughters of the Massieu family, owners of the farm which surrounded us. He had five children, ranging from Barry's age on down. I asked him to bring them all up the following Sunday. He did, and perhaps the best way to describe that meeting is to excerpt a letter written to a friend by Saro, his wife.

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When we arrived at Villa La Solana, I could sense a change about the place. Dick came out of the courtyard to greet us, followed shortly afterward by Katie. Both looked relaxed and comfortable in their jeans. And both impressed me favorably from the first moment with their frank, open and gay smiles. I found her to be an attractive, freckled, gingerhaired young woman, who put all her face muscles to work when she talked and laughed. Very American, according to my ideas of American women.

One by one, from here and there, little Walters began to appear. All wore jeans, and all seemed about the same age. Never have I heard of an American family with more than one or two children, and those spaced comfortably, so I'm afraid I just stood and stared at first. They could speak no Spanish and my children no English, but they soon started to play together with noisy success.

Arturo asked Barry in English how he managed to get on so well with my Margie.

"Well," Barry said, "we have a sort of secret code between us."

Katie knew enough Spanish to start me talking and pretty soon I found that we had many things to discuss. She questioned me on the Canario names for diverse grocery and household items and wrote everything in a small notebook. She had been traveling into Las Palmas on the Golden Bus—something that would frighten me to death in a strange country—but speaks of it as if the only difficulty is how to say "carrots" in Spanish. I found it hard to understand why she and Dick would leave all the comforts of America to seclude themselves in a countryside where customs are archaic and where there's not even that marvelous current called electricity to run a refrigerator and a reading lamp and so on. When Arturo first told me about them I thought that they must be either misguided

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or half-crazy. Now that I can see that they wish to live as Canarios, rather than as Americans-in-exile, I can better understand their venture. But I'm not sure they won't tire of our unexciting life and go home early.

Like us, Saro and Arturo had been married nine years. Their courtship, however, could hardly have been more different. They met when he was twenty-two and she was fifteen. For the next seven years an understanding existed between them. In American college terms, we might say they were "pinned," though it was nothing so obvious. There was no visible token of this "understanding" until his parents asked for her hand, so that he might add an engagement ring. Even then to go anywhere alone at night Arturo, as a young man, could circulate freely but Saro was always chaperoned. All her girlhood had been spent in the company of her family or other girls. Her father was one of the Island's most successful and highly respected physicians, with a large home in Las Palmas and a paying farm and summer home up-country. He died in 1941, too soon to see his daughters married or his sons through school. Her mother, a handsome woman of great strength and character, bore ten children. Two died and the remaining four sons and four daughters were to be among our most intimate friends in Grand Canary. Gregorio, the eldest, took over his father's medical practice as soon as he received his certificate in Madrid. Emilio, the second son, took over the management of the farm. The other two are still in school.

Saro, in 1945, was the first of the girls to marry. Maria Luisa married Antonio Guillem, a naval officer from Madrid, in 1947. Tere married Alberto Cabré, an advertising man from Barcelona, in 1948. And in 1951, Pino married Manuel Ley, a Las

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Palmas businessman whose father had been one of the top Ford-Lincoln-Mercury dealers of all Spain. In 1931 he sold so many Fords that he and his wife, Cloty, were personally invited by Henry Ford, Sr. to visit him in Dearborn and tour the United States in a new Lincoln with all expenses paid. After his death, his dealership was taken over by Arturo's brother, Angel Lenton. We'll get back to Angel a little later.

The seven year "understanding" between Saro and Arturo, though about par for Canario girls, was no tray of truffles for Saro. The first two years were clouded by the Spanish Civil War and for the last three Arturo was away in World War II, serving as a volunteer in the British Royal Artillery. This, some of Saro's friends felt was the wrong side to be fighting for. Germany and Italy had helped Franco to bring order out of chaos in Spain. Some grateful Canarios were closing their neutral eyes while German submarines refueled at night off the Las Palmas breakwater. So Saro's casting her lot with Arturo was an act not unaccompanied by courage. Upon his return from service they set a wedding date, and as is the custom announced their engagement a few weeks before the wedding. Until this announcement, she was free to go with other guys, and he with other gals, and either could dissolve the "understanding" without censure. Long engagements are rare in Grand Canary, but a long "understanding" is a must.

For Arturo, marriage meant settling down to a quiet, well-ordered family life. No more war. Less running around town with "the boys." Instead, the establishment of a home for what he hoped would be many children and refuge from office and ships where he could commune with Saro, a good book or with other members of his and Saro's families.

For Saro, marriage meant liberation. At last she could go out in public with her one-and-only by her side. At last she could

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catch up on movies and dances and picnics and drives and night clubs and shipboard parties and concerts, which Arturo had enjoyed for fourteen years before marriage. But five babies in seven years, as the English say, threw a spanner in the works. When Katie and I arrived, the twins had just reached walking age.

Their nine-room house in Las Palmas' newest, finest residential section was staffed by an excellent cook, two housemaids and two nursemaids. The two eldest children were in parochial schools, eight hours a day, six days a week, forty-two weeks a year. So Saro was set to sow some oats at last.

But Arturo, alas, was still groping for the pipe and slippers routine.

"I'm still trying to finish a book I started a month ago," he explained to us at Villa La Solana that day.

"But we just can't let *Roman Holiday* slip through our fingers like *that*!" exclaimed Saro, snapping her fingers for emphasis. But beneath this conversational gambit, a powerful bond, a soul-deep understanding joined the two of them. Their children behaved respectfully toward them, and at parting time came up to Katie and me and kissed our cheeks. Their pig-tailed Margie turned on the feminine charm with both faucets and had Barry thinking up one impressive stunt after another to win her applause. The attraction lasted. Almost a year later, at Margie's first communion party, she chose Barry as her partner to lead the dancing.

It was more by accident than design that we happened upon Saro's brother, Gregorio Leon. It was dusk, the kids were in bed and Katie and I were hunting the runaway rabbit. Fela had captured a wild rabbit one morning with her market bag and had given it to Craig as a birthday present. He kept it in a

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cage rigged up by Andres, but as so often happens the little rascal got away. In mid-search up the mountainside, we ran across Eugenio Camalich, the aforementioned Italian ex-sea captain and manager of the farm which surrounded us.

"Haven't seen a runaway rabbit, have you?" asked Katie.

"A runaway what?" asked Eugenio, with raised eyebrows.

It did sound pretty ridiculous, when we stopped to think about it. Particularly when the rabbit had never even smiled at Craig. So we all stood there and laughed it off.

"Forget the rabbit and let's go looking for some gin and Fargas," suggested Eugenio, and he led the way to the Massieu house, which clung to the top of a hundred foot cliff. There we met his wife, Lolita, who was the eldest Massieu daughter, her sisters Magdalena and Otilia, three unmarried brothers and their widowed mother and Gregorio. There were a half-dozen others in the room and nine servants wandering in and out, altogether a live-in population of twenty-five when you counted the children abed. The three Massieu sisters displayed an enviable inward calm, the sort of serenity which can come only to one who has found what she wants in life and knows just where she stands. None of them had ever lived outside of the Canary Islands. None had had more than nine years' schooling. But they had poise and charm and an easy naturalness with one another that made us feel at home without being urged. Eugenio and Lolita had four children and were expecting the fifth, which eventually gave them five girls under nine years of age. Gregorio and Magdalena had two girls and a boy under seven and were expecting another. Otilia had an attentive beau, a husky, good-looking tomato-grower named Augustin Bonny, who paid her such constant court that he was for all intents and purposes a member of the family. A Canario marriage is as much a marriage of families as of individuals. The long period of

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"understanding" is mostly spent in family visits, so they've lots of chance to investigate and duck out before getting outlaws for in-laws. As divorce is illegal in the eyes of both church and state, their "I do" might well be followed by "And how!."

Gregorio came over and asked about divorce in America. There was no camouflaging his and the others' distaste for this highly publicized facet of our family life. I don't think it an exaggeration to say that they consider our 1 in 3 divorce rate as uncivilized as we the atrocity stories from Dachau and Buchenwald. Marriage and the family unit, after all, is the very basis of civilization; dissolve it or cheapen it with repetition and you dissolve or cheapen civilization itself. Alimony, they felt, gave a false impression of the values of marriage. By swapping financial responsibility for moral and spiritual responsibility we had turned the marriage contract into just another business risk for the man, a lottery for the woman.

As the conversation raced on, I began to see why these people had not bothered to visit us in the weeks we had lived right there on their own farm. Not so much as a note of welcome or a distant hail. They knew that some Americans had moved in and apparently that's all they needed to know.

The American woman came in for a lioness's share of implied criticism. Though the girls' eyes glowed when they spoke admiringly of the American electric kitchen, packaged cake mixes, frozen vegetables and gleaming supermarkets, they obviously deplored the apparent effect of such things upon the so-called liberated woman. What did she do with the free time that resulted from mechanical labor and packaged thinking? What did she do with the money saved from not having to hire servants? Why did she need anesthesia at childbirth? And why did she need all this schooling, which duplicated the political and economic knowledge and skills of men? Was this new time



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and money and comfort and knowledge helping to better fulfill her unique, unchallenged role: to raise her children better, to keep her home and family a stronger, happier unit, to be a better partner to her husband? Hadn't she, in effect, sacrificed her indomitable position of Queen Bee, in order to buzz around with the drones?

The American man was not so controversial. There seemed less to say about him. He was a man who worked long hours away from his home and family. He lived on borrowed money. He was capable of inventing, improving and operating fantastic machines. His primary interest was to make money by rendering a perfectly good product obsolete by substituting another slightly better. He was a man with little or no culture, whose mind, though ingenious, required black and white answers for everything. He did not understand Europe, but wanted to impose his systems and cut and dried doctrines upon her peoples. Eisenhower was a great man but one could not be sure that our millions of voters were intelligent enough to realize this. Truman was a nobody. Franklin Roosevelt was, or acted like a communist.

Throughout this zestful repartee Doña Maria Magdalena Verdugo de Massieu, the matriarch, sat with magnificent calm. It was impossible to tell whether she approved or disapproved of us, but it was clear that she was giving the matter a great deal of thought. The Massieu family had helped settle the Canaries five centuries before, though much of their original land grant had been sold off. At this time they owned a virtually depression-proof combination of four farms on Grand Canary: a banana plantation on the North Shore, a tomato and livestock farm to the south, a vegetable and fruit farm in the higher mountains and one down in the Angostura. Each farm had a resident superintendent and a dozen or so workers who lived on or

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near the farm in small stone cottages. Eugenio, husband of the eldest offspring, was picked by Señora Massieu's late husband to manage all four farms for the family. As an Italian sea captain, his agricultural ideas were suspect at first but in time he proved his worth, even though Señora Massieu, with the wisdom of the ages, kept a close rein on capital improvements. It is a Canario axiom that to stay out of debt is to stay happy and the bankers cooperate by frowning on all but the most risk-free personal and mortgage loans.

It's not too hard to fathom this family's serene approach to life. Besides being out of debt, their farms, under Eugenio's watchful eye, supply most of the food requirements for the households of all sons and daughters. They own homes on the farms as well as in Las Palmas itself. Gregorio is the family physician and surgeon. Other relatives can handle exportation of the crops. One of the younger sons is studying agriculture. Another is studying shipping. With loyal and contented help, they are untouched by do-it-yourselfism. They are satisfied with their religion. They welcome additional children, just add a maid or two. They admire Mr. Franco and are satisfied with his government. They live in the world's most perfectly even year-round climate which asks little of body or wardrobe. Entertainment is no problem either. They don't exhaust themselves with sports or with traveling long distances. An occasional movie, an annual concert or two, dinner at Canteras beach when fresh *calamares* come in—such activities do little to complicate or crowd the day. A swim in the ocean, a radio and record player in the town house, a drive in the one farm-and-family station wagon to some delightful corner of the island is little strain on the purse. Beyond that, there's sewing, drawn-thread work, family gathering at tea and extensive practice of the art of conversation.

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It was impossible to imagine an ulcer popping up in this crowd. After all, what would one worry about? The H-Bomb? No—their only concern here lay in whether our tests in Nevada would upset their winter tomato crop. War had not touched them since Sir Francis Drake threatened Las Palmas in 1565 and was sent a-running. The British tried to land once more on neighboring Tenerife in 1797, but a Canario cannonball took off Lord Nelson's arm and dealt him the worst defeat of his great career. Both World Wars bypassed them and even their own country's civil war was over a thousand miles away. The land was too dry for mosquito breeding, so malaria was keeping its distance. Except for the usual childhood diseases, epidemics were unknown. There was no such thing as a highway death toll, what with only a few cars, leisurely speeds and no teen-age drivers or hot rodders. Even the volcanoes had forgotten to erupt for several centuries.

American doctors are known to have more than their share of ulcers and often blame their low mortality age on an all-work-and-no-play routine. Gregorio's day, though all were not alike, may suggest an answer. On Friday, January 21, 1955, for instance (the only day I thought to ask him), he arose in his town house at 8, had a cup of coffee and a roll in his room at 8:15 and strolled downstairs to work in his X-ray lab from 8:30 to 9:30. He then walked three blocks to the hospital, operated until 11:30, returned to his home to have another cup of coffee and to see patients in his office until one o'clock. A twenty minute bus ride and he joined his family and ours on the beach for an hour and a half. Sometimes they have a basket meal on the beach but on this day they returned home for a big dinner at three. From 3:30 to 4:30 he napped and listened to music with Magdalena. Again patients' office hours until six. At 6:30 he had tea and cakes with the family and at seven, he and Mag-

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dalena went to a movie. From nine till ten he read to his girls and roughhoused with three-year-old Gregorito who was slow to surrender to slumber. At ten the maids brought in a light supper. At 10:30 Katie and I stopped by for a nightcap and a story. At twelve, lights out.

That night at the Massieu farmhouse, Gregorio and the others were slow to warm up to us, and our halting Spanish put up something of a cold front, but warm up they did and after a while we were swapping American and Canario songs to the tune of a guitar played by one of the brothers.

They walked us home and as we turned in the drive to Villa La Solana the sound of more singing and guitar music wafted across the orange groves from the little green store. A number of Eugenio's farmhands were there, including the man who ran the pump house, the farm superintendent, the barber, who was our Fela's fella, and assorted others in bare feet and skillfully patched clothes. The farmhands earned \$3.25 a week, plus 50¢ social security and medical insurance. The superintendent earned \$4.50 a week plus a rent-free house, all the farm produce he needed and a quart of milk a day. Though many families had several breadwinners adding to this "take" nobody had to worry about how to spend his money or invest it. Rarely did they pay for goods and services upon receipt. A lady's or man's honor sufficed, in fact was preferred. If you insisted upon paying at once you were saying, in effect, "I don't want to be obliged to you because I think you may be unpleasant about it or possibly take advantage of me." To a Canario, this is almost as insulting as being called a crook or a cheat.

Money was so scarce it had little importance in the lives of our valley neighbors. Farm owners like the Massieus were respected rather than resented—not because they had money—

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but because they were good people. Because they looked after the valley folks and would see them through trouble. Because they provided the means of livelihood. Possibly also because they "had always been there." With 75 per cent of the worker's income going for food (vs. 72 per cent in Spain as a whole and 30 per cent in the U.S.) his remaining expenditures would hardly be anything to brag about, and certainly nothing to worry about. Whereas Katie and I had considered a second bathroom practically a necessity for a family of six in Haddonfield and put a lot of time and energy and thought into planning it, most of these people weren't even concerned with putting in their *first*. Judging by the trouble ours led to at Villa La Solana, I'm not so sure they're wrong.

Take electricity. One day the landlord came up to say that we couldn't get electricity unless the village of Santa Brigida saw fit to run a two mile line to us at an estimated expense to the municipality of \$350.

"What are the chances of this happening?" I asked.

"Very small," he said. "The only people who would use it are you and possibly the Massieus. The same amount of the municipality's money could be spent in other ways to benefit more people."

"Why do you say *possibly* the Massieus?" I asked. "I should think they'd sing hallelujah!"

"Probably not, they would have to wire the house and put in fixtures. I don't think they want to spend so much money just for electricity."

"Then perhaps I can sell enough valley people on the wonders of an electrified home. Then they'll put pressure on the municipality."

The landlord smiled his broad, kindly gentleman-smile and made me feel like a paddle wheel out of water, just fanning the

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air. Eventually he said, "Well, if you can find anyone else to advance half of the \$350, I'll put up the rest."

When he had left Katie grinned and gave me a playful nudge. "You don't sound bananafied at all," she said. "Talk about selling people on the wonders of electricity . . . ha! You're still back in your Philadelphia office."

"Look here," I snorted, "it's only hard-working advertising guys like me who manage to spoil gals like you with wonderful things like electricity. If I could get 350 families to want this electricity we could have the cable put in at a dollar apiece and wouldn't have to wait for the municipality of Santa Brigida to make up its bureaucratic mind."

First I tackled Eugenio. He was not interested. "We have it in the house in town," he said, "but out here we get along all right with kerosene. Anyway, I'm sure Doña Maria Magdalena would frown on such a sum of money."

I was about to throw in a good word for electric appliances but checked myself when I remembered the nine servants.

I later spoke to the pump-house man and the storekeeper, though my store of confidence was running low. The former couldn't get into his head that I was talking about light for his home rather than power for the pumps, which he did not own. Why would I put the question to him? The storekeeper smiled politely and all I could get from him was, "Yes, electric light is very good," repeated several times. He had a big pressure lamp hanging from the ceiling. This put out about two hundred watts. Light bulbs in use elsewhere put out only about a quarter of that strength. In the corner of the store lay the spigoted fifty-gallon drum of kerosene, one of his fastest moving items. Thoroughly beaten I retired to the kerosene lamps of Villa La Solana and to "Astral," the restive little refrigerator which had yet to congeal a cube or chill a salad.

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I made my last abortive effort in power politics a few days later at Maspalomas, a wild and wonderful dune-lined beach at the south end of the island. We'd been driven down by the Swedish hotel owner and introduced to a jolly Canario who served on the Santa Brigida village council. After we'd talked about this and that and got well buried in the warm sand, I plunged into a little lobbying for our faltering cause.

"Electricity is a personal matter," he said, "not the concern of the municipality or any government group. If Angostura folks want it they'll pay to have it brought in." He smiled and turned his eyes from the surf to me. "But I think you'll find they don't want it, or can't or don't want to pay for it or just don't care. Even in Santa Brigida where it's been available for ages, more people do without it than with it."

"But doesn't the electric company want more customers?"

"Of course not—they have enough headaches supplying the ones they have. Even now they must switch off the power for an hour or two every day."

Electricity was not the only utility our Angostura neighbors got along without. In the entire valley of some hundreds of families there was just one telephone. Bolted to the wall of the stock room of a store a mile or so up valley, it would pass for one of Alexander Graham Bell's original models. The system itself could have been rigged up by Rube Goldberg. My first and last call through this system was to our Swedish friends in Las Palmas, eight miles away. "Good ol' telephone," my narrow, spoiled little American mind thought as I walked into the store, "saves me an hour's bus ride into Las Palmas."

"Want a cognac while you're waiting, Señor?" asked the storekeeper pleasantly. The carpenter was having one, and the man from the gofio mill and several other store-step cowboys, so I joined in. The storekeeper appointed somebody to show

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me how to crank the ringer. There was no particular signal of longs and shorts like we used to have in the Forest Service where I worked one summer, but just continuous cranking until each of us got tired and sat down. After fifteen minutes of this up-and-down business, I asked, trying to sound matter-of-fact, if it wouldn't be faster to walk the mile and a half to the Santa Brigida exchange and call from there.

"Won't do you any good," said my cranking partner, "but you might save time by sending your message right to Las Palmas on the Golden Bus."

I laughed, but nobody else did.

"Here," said the storekeeper, "have another cognac."

The facts came to me in dribs and drabs. There were twenty telephones for the 10,000 population of Santa Brigida, one of the most prosperous and sophisticated towns on the island. All twenty, including the one I was using, ran into a switchboard in a cafe. The switchboard operator was also waiter, bartender and dishwasher, and often stepped across the street for change or a haircut or whatever. Sometimes a woman's voice answered, though none of my store cronies was sure who she was. If a call rang in when she and the waiter were busy, they'd just curse the switchboard and let it ring. Occasionally a customer would answer, just to stop the infernal racket. Eighteen of the twenty telephones belonged to business establishments, two to farms, and practically all of the calls were to out-of-town points. Local messages were better delivered in person or by a boy runner.

Two lines connected the switchboard with the lucky outside world. One line ran to a half dozen telephones up in the mountains, ending at a hotel in a 5,000 foot pass; the other to the lower village of Tafira where there were still more telephones and two lines running into the metropolis of Las Palmas. When



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our ring was at last answered by the waiter, these lines were busy. "Ring me again in a little while," he said cheerily.

"Have another cognac," added the storekeeper, as I sat down again.

By this time many more people had gathered in the store. Still others peered in the big outside doors and asked friends what I was doing there. That I was about to shout in Spanish loud enough to overcome the grinding of the gofio mill and loud enough to be heard in Las Palmas, appeared to appeal to them. More and more people arrived. One woman dispatched a small boy for reinforcements. He returned with five. One handed me a bunch of grapes to take home to the kids. The storekeeper brought four hard candies.

"Is this like telephones in Cuba?" asked a man who had been drinking cognacs from the start.

I said that I didn't know about Cuba, but that in the United States our telephones were smaller.

"Smaller," said another man to others behind him.

"Smaller," said a boy to a woman at the door.

"Smaller where?" asked another woman.

"In Cuba," said the boy.

Halfway through the fourth cognac, one of the increasing number of volunteer crank winders got me a line. I shouted into the ostrich-necked mouthpiece that I wanted the Playa Hotel. This set up such a buzz in the store that I couldn't understand the crackling, rasping, reply from the other end. I yelled twice more for the Playa Hotel then the line went dead.

More ringing brought the waiter, then again the Las Palmas operator. Each wanted to babble unintelligible and seemingly irrelevant things to me. Why couldn't they just shut up and ring the number? When the hotel answered at last there was an interminable wait while someone climbed three flights of steps to

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bring Mr. Wårnegård down from his penthouse. In English, I asked him if he was going to pick us up the next day for a drive into the mountains. My change of languages brought nods and nudges here and there in the crowd. I strained my ears to hear above the murmurs.

"I don't know yet about tomorrow," came the faint reply. "Call me again after seven."

The friendliness and serene good nature of the valley people tended to relax us more and more. We grew confident that they'd never hurt the kids. Housebreakers were unknown so we didn't bother to lock two difficult doors when going out. And we trusted all who worked within. Only one incident violated this trust and it had a curious outcome.

Besides Fela in the kitchen and Andres outdoors, we had a housemaid who cleaned rooms, clothes and kids. She was not as friendly as the others, and spoke hardly a word, but did her work well. One day she failed to show up. In her place came a smiling, strapping, handsome Amazon named Josefa. Her story was that the other gal had taken the morning bus to Las Palmas and thence to the south of the island to work in the tomato fields and would not be back. No good-bys, no request for her uncollected pay. Josefa would be glad to take over the job.

The next day we began to miss things. Nylons, cuff links, earrings, a nightgown, a bed jacket, an unopened bottle of Lanvin's Arpege. Fela and Josefa were horrified and angered. Their peoples' honor had been violated. The girl's father had gone south with her, leaving a cousin in Angostura village. We decided to seek advice from the Massieus.

"I'd call the civil police," said Eugenio.

"So would I," agreed Lolita. "They'll jail the girl, but don't count on getting your things back. They're probably already

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in the black market. What upsets me most is the Lanvin's Arpege. It's my favorite perfume, too."

But I couldn't believe that this quiet young girl was a true criminal.

"Suppose we send her a note," I suggested, "and promise no police if she returns the goods?"

Eugenio looked doubtful. "Might work," he said, "but if not, the police will have lost all that time."

Katie wrote the note in Spanish. Josefa took it to the girl's cousin and asked her to deliver it in person.

The following Sunday, the Massieu family returned from mass in the chapel over the yellow store with alarming news. The chapel reeked to the rafters of Lanvin's Arpege.

"Smelled as if every girl in the place had sprayed her mantilla with it," Magdalena reported, "and I've never noticed it before on anyone else in the valley. After all, the smallest bottle costs as much as two month's wages."

"Americans raise stink in Angostura Valley," said I, inevitably.

"It's not funny," snapped Katie.

No doubt about it, our cozy little psychological maneuver was beginning to look naive and textbooky. Almost a week had passed since Josefa delivered the note. We should have followed Eugenio's advice.

"I can just picture that girl picking tomatoes in my bed jacket," said Katie grimly.

But that night, just as defeat settled heavily on our minds, came a knock at the courtyard gate. Fela and Josefa had been off since two o'clock so I picked up a lantern and investigated. In the pale yellow beam, faces bright with smiles, were Fela and two friends with a package. The tomato-picking gal had coughed up and everything was there. The seal on the perfume

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had been broken, but the bottle looked full. Whatever had been used was too little to smell up a church, unless. . . .

Yep, it was only a whiff of its former self.

As the weeks passed and our contacts broadened we discovered that dilution was an accepted art. Behind it all was the Canario's sincere desire to keep life simple and to keep everybody happy. Soft drinks, coffee, wine and gasoline, all varied in strength and performance and occasioned lots of good natured head-wagging in the cafes. But the most preposterous bilk was milk.

Just as Grand Canary's pasturage shortage produced bony steers, it held down production in the udder department. The daily supply of fresh milk from cows and goats was said to be 10 per cent to 30 per cent less than the demand. An English friend reported this conversation with the local government's milk commissioner.

"So you're the milk commissioner!" exclaimed our friend, frankly surprised that such an office actually existed, "you must have a nasty time of it trying to keep these rascals from watering the milk!"

"You're quite mistaken, Señor," replied the commissioner calmly, "the most difficult part of my job is to make sure that the water they put in is reasonably pure."

Once I was standing in a Las Palmas garage, waiting for a mechanic to fill my kerosene tin when along came three Angostura acquaintances lugging two five-gallon milk cans. One was a jolly heavy-set character who had been in on that crank-and-drink telephone call so I got to talking with him while he worked. First he stuck the unfull milk cans under a water faucet in the corner of the garage until they were full. With a third can, he and his assistants soda-jerked the contents from one can

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to the other, then divided it among several small containers. The remainder went into a gleaming white house-to-house bicycle cart. The amount didn't appear to satisfy the teen-ager, who sat chewing his nails on the bicycle, for he muttered something and pointed to the other containers. My friend shook his head, filled a wine bottle with water and emptied it into the cart. At this the young man raised a howl of protest, but getting only a shrug from my friend he clammed up and pedaled away.

The mechanic handed me my kerosene and smiled after the departing delivery man. "He always thinks he can get Tuesday milk on Saturday," he said.

"What's the difference?" I asked.

"Naturally Saturday milk has more water in it," he said, "people always want more milk on Saturday. The cows don't oblige, so these fellows must make up the difference. Tuesday, well, there's not so much bought on Tuesday, so it's got less water in it. Every day's different. Take fiesta days. Sometimes the demand is so great that the delivery boys come back for more water in the middle of the morning."

"A little milk in your water," smiled my friend, who had just stepped within hearing.

"How did you happen to pick this garage for your depot?" I asked him.

"Good water," he said quickly. "The big main runs right by here and this pipe comes direct from it. It's the best water in town."

This started us wondering about our own three quarts a day from the farm near the little green store. Fela said she'd never seen water go into it, but she was never in the barn at milking time, and had to get our teakettle filled from a can in the farm kitchen. To satisfy our curiosity, we began sending Barry and

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Brian down at milking time to draw ours direct from the barn. All went well until the fourth day when the cowhand insisted on making the transfer in the kitchen.

"He gave the pails to a lady and she told us to wait outside the door," complained Barry.

The milk didn't taste different, but it *was* Saturday.

Grand Canary's 370,000 residents can be broken down for purposes of conversation into native Canarios, transplanted Spaniards from the Peninsula and foreigners. Both Canarios and Spaniards can be further divided into a small upper class with possessions, servants, serenity and a few worries; and a very large lower class with virtually no possessions, no worries and a bucketful of happiness. In the cities, a small middle class is developing in the commercial world. It is my impression that these folks are the least happy of all. Through education and ambition, their motors are too revved up to idle along with their ancestral lower class. Yet they have neither the gas nor the climbing power nor the proper design for flying the higher altitudes. Thousands of them, through the years, have recognized the loneliness and fruitlessness of this situation and changed base to Cuba, Venezuela or Argentina where their misery has more company and draws better pay. A large percentage return, disillusioned, to the land of their birth and settle back into their lower-class contentment. Andres' father was one who migrated to Cuba during the sugar boom. Andres was born there and stayed just long enough for his father to develop distaste for a fast-buck economy. Back in the Angostura, with a stone cottage, a small piece of land given to them by the Massieus and odd jobs like gardening and pumping water for us or growing cactus to feed Eugenio's cows, Andres is a portrait of contentment.

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Some months later, we had a rare opportunity to see what happens when a fortune-seeking son comes home. On a small inter-island boat headed for Santa Cruz de La Palma, a sparkling new coral-and-cream Chevrolet hardtop was loaded on deck. A dark, flashily-dressed young man of about twenty-eight stepped over and covered it with a huge transparent plastic jacket. When morning came he removed the jacket, dusted the car with a special dusting mitt and snarled at deck passengers who stepped up to touch the finish or peer in at the two-tone upholstery and dashboard. It was then I noticed the license plate of Venezuela, and full of Pan-American good will, Katie and I cornered him for a conversation. He lit up a cigarette, forgot to offer us one, and told me about his Venezuelan oil company job, between short quick puffs and frequent flicking of ashes downwind into the face of another passenger. He did not intend to go back. When his wife and two frilly-dressed young daughters came along he forgot to introduce them, called to someone else to stay away from his car and glowered while his wife bawled out the girls for leaning against the dirty railing and stepping on each other's white shoes.

As we pulled up to the breakwater, a cheer came from some roughly-dressed young men clustered around a hawser bitt. In the back of the crowd, a pleasant-looking middle-aged lady stretched to her tiptoes and waved wildly. The couple smiled faintly but did not wave back. One of the young men arched his frame across three feet of water and shot up his hand in greeting.

"It's marvelous to have you back," he shouted.

"Hello, Juan," said the other. He took the hand briefly and looked across the crowd for other familiar faces.

Once on the breakwater, the new arrivals stood out from their fellow islanders, like people from another planet.

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As soon as the car was unloaded, the family and others piled in until the wheels almost disappeared into the fenders. The flashily-dressed young man jazzed the motor a few times, good-bys were called and the car took off toward town with a great dramatic roar. He hadn't gone more than a hundred feet when two customs guards stepped out with a stop sign.

"Your papers, Señor," said one.

"They looked at them back there," he snapped.

"But you must show them also in this house. This way, please."

"Look," barked the young man, looking back at the crowd he'd left behind with such a flourish, "can't you see I'm in a hurry!"

"You are welcome to go on foot," said the guard, "but we will have to hold the car."

By now the crowd had caught up with the car and were again huddling around it. I heard someone say that it was the first 1955 American car to arrive on the islands and certainly the first new American car of any type to be brought in by a native son. An invisible wall was rising between the crowd and the occupants of the car. Both angry and confused, the young man stalked into the customs shack.

"Seventy-one pesetas, please," said the stevedore boss.

The young man looked surprised, then turned to me. "They all want money," he said. "When I went away I paid for practically nothing—just a kid trying to get along. Now everybody knows I got money and I've done nothing but pay—pay—pay all the way from Venezuela."

"Forty-five pesetas," said a customs man from behind a desk, "for stamping your *carnet*."

The young man glowered, paid and left the shack to find his car and family, except for two prank-playing youngsters, quite alone.



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If the bridge between the classes is seldom crossed, the bridge between the Peninsula and the Canaries feels the tramp of many feet. Merchants and artisans and farmers, schooled in the more modern tempo of Continental life, come to Grand Canary with grand ideas. When these fail to impress the Canarios, or to move them to action, the Peninsular Spaniards grow critical. "Stupid bananafied people!" they say, to which Saro once replied, "Would you show me your invitation, please?" "What invitation?" asked the critic. "The invitation we sent to you to come to the Canary Islands." The critics eventually either shut up or go home and life goes on as before.

Sprinkled thinly through the 370,000 Canarios and Peninsular Spaniards are 1,450 foreigners who live on the island through the grace of the local governor. About half are Africans and Asiatics; Syrians, Arabs, and Indians who are mostly merchants and agents in the port. We were the only Americans except for a Protestant missionary and his family, two retired couples and the wife of an English tomato grower. Deduct a handful of Scandinavians, Italians, Belgians, Dutch, Swiss and French and you're left with two dominant foreign colonies: the Germans with 250 and the British with about 400. The integration of these last two groups into the life and economy of the island is important and interesting. To my knowledge, there are no idle rich among them. All are gainfully employed in shipping, refueling, farming, fish packing and such, which makes their relationships with Canarios a matter of moment. The Germans, particularly since the last war, have tended to lose their national identity and blend in more with local life. The British tend to preserve their national identity and keep to themselves.

There are some sense-making explanations for this. The British nation is 400 to 1,000 years old, depending on whether you lump Scotland and Wales with England. Her military, com-

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mercial and cultural successes have been singularly consistent through the centuries. In Spain she has not enhanced her popularity by (a) sinking the Spanish Armada, (b) twice trying to put the snatch on the Canaries, (c) audaciously fortifying a piece of the Spanish peninsula called Gibraltar, (d) backing the "wrong side" in the Spanish Civil War, (e) blockading the Canaries and the peninsular coastline in World War II and searching Spanish ships, (f) forcing the Germans to abandon their crusade to squash Spain's and the world's most insidious enemy—Communism.

The German nation, on the other hand, is hardly eighty-five years old and in this brief span of a human life has been slapped down twice for trying to flex a national muscle. She endeared herself to Spain by helping Franco to put down the Spanish Leftists, by carrying the fight against Communism to the gates of Moscow and by making high-quality precision industrial products which many Spaniards feel are the finest in the world.

An English friend gave another possible reason for harmony between Germans and Spaniards. "This is practically the only country in Europe," he said, "where a German feels welcome. He may be welcome elsewhere, but he doesn't feel it. Nobody recognizes better than he the clumsiness and loneliness of the Nazi occupation job in World War II. The Spaniard didn't kibitz this and doesn't hold it against him."

I think it goes deeper than this. Hand-in-hand with the phenomenal rebuilding job in their homeland, Germans have been striving to win approval as human beings. One can stand just so long being called such things as a beast, a puppet, a sucker, a squarehead and a humorless stick. However accurate or inaccurate such generalizations, the German recognizes that the Spaniard—particularly the Canario—is positively not a squarehead or a humorless stick. Here is a people, who not only en-

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dured poverty and Allied censure, but sailed through it with guitars a-strumming, castanets a-clacking, *aficionados* ole-ing, fans a-waving and mantillas held high. Certainly there is something to learn from them . . . the casualness that is unstudied, the gaiety that is unforced, the industriousness that is not all-consuming, the dignity unpadded by uniform or jewelry or Mercedes-Benz.

The English faith in being English—as if we needed a reminder after Dunkirk and Malta and the London Blitz—is a world-wide phenomenon. The Englishman quietly makes the best of it wherever he goes. To the Canaries he takes as much of his way of life as it's possible to take. He works smoothly with Canarios in field or office but socializes with other English, goes to his own English church on Sunday and to his own English club on weekdays. He sends his children, at a chilling financial sacrifice, to school in England. His wife imports English books, magazines, newspapers, toys, records, clothes, appliances, furnishings and food. She pours tea at four and sits down to supper at half-past eight rather than the Canarios' six and ten, because "that's when we always did it at home."

Every year, or as close to it as possible, she packs the suitcases and with or without hubby, catches the fastest plane or ship home to mother, or sister or "even a hotel—just so it's home!" When she returns you ask her to outline the epic events. The theater on Haymarket? A visit to the Queen? A drive through the Cotswolds? Reunion with old friends?

"No," she says, "nothing like that. We just lived there, and it was the most wonderful feeling!"

The first Englishman we met on Grand Canary was John Doorly. I spotted him on the beach just after we moved into the Playa Hotel. He was wearing only bathing trunks and a Prince Albert mustache that no Canario would be seen dead in,

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but which has been quite ripping in England for at least 150 years. On him it looked good, and encouraged by the tanned laugh-lines by his eyes I introduced myself and started a year-long friendship which we shall treasure for many years to come.

Anyone who likes swimming, sunning and other beach gambits will quickly understand why John is in no hurry to return to chilly old England. Though he works full-time for an oil bunkering firm, he manages to swim virtually every day in the year. From September to June he works from nine to 12:30 and three to six. By 12:55 he's on the beach, slips into his trunks and plunges into the ocean with his wife and children. Friends turn their steps from the promenade and sit in the sand to talk with him. On days when family and friends don't come he stretches out and reads a book. At two he discreetly slips back into his office clothes and takes the five-minute walk to his apartment at a brisk clip. Follows a good dinner, exquisitely served and topped off with a demitasse in the music room (piano, record player, deep-pile carpet—a transplanted bit of England, you know). A ten minute bus ride and he's back refueling ships.

In summer months—a joke because in Las Palmas summer is sometimes cooler than winter—he works what they call “intensive hours,” from eight straight through to two with a coffee break at eleven or so. At two, he goes to the beach for the rest of the day.

Arbiters for the British colony were Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Miller. Though born and reared on Grand Canary, Mr. Miller was as English as a pound sterling. He spoke fluent Spanish in the Canario idiom and knew the islands like his own yard but wouldn't miss that yearly refresher in England. With a successful shipping business, he managed also to serve without pay as the British Consul. There was no American Consul in the Is-

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lands so I wrote Mr. Miller from America, and he immediately consented to receive our mail until we found a house.

"I'm a victim of your General Eisenhower's economy drive," he told me with an absolutely deadpan expression. "Your consulate here was closed to save money for the American taxpayer and make work for me!"

He fooled me completely. "I'm sorry, Mr. Miller," I said, "I had no idea there was much American activity here!"

"Lots of it," he snapped. "You're the second in a year. Last winter a chap came through on a yacht, name of Pudge—Podge—Dodge, something like that."

All English were not as approachable as the Millers and Doorlys. During our early weeks on Grand Canary we felt some backwash from resentment generated by G.I.'s. in the days when they were "overpaid, oversexed and over here."

One morning Katie and I sat down at a Las Palmas sidewalk cafe just in time to overhear a comment in English from another table: ". . . and now I suppose the whole island will be overrun with them." The voice went on to say in a guarded tone, "You can expect the price of practically everything to double!"

It took us about three months to live this down. Tales of Katie's price wars with the fishmongers, the kids making their own toys and my bargain-hunting for even the smallest necessities must have calmed their fears. The person who spoke the above words, though he won't know until he reads this that we heard him, eventually became such a good friend that we insulted each other freely face-to-face.

The enormous usefulness of a motorcar is somewhat obscured in America by its very commonplace existence. From our very

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first day in Grand Canary, through such missions as house-hunting, trunk-moving, shopping in Las Palmas and taking the kids to the beach, we sorely missed having a car. For the Simple Life, a modern car seems out of place. But we found that adjusting life to the Golden Bus introduced its own frustrations. Family sightseeing had to wait for the overtures of friends and the problem of what to do about school would soon present itself. Cars are extremely rare and hard-to-get in Grand Canary. There were only 1600 private cars, including station wagons used for farm and delivery work, for all of the island's 370,000 people. This is 1 for every 231, contrasted to 1 for every 3 persons in the U.S. Average age of these cars was about twenty years, a mid-point between postwar European models and pre-depression American beauties—lots of 1928 Plymouths and Chryslers, many makes long since vanished from our vocabulary and a 1918 Hudson. Between 1936 and 1947 the inflow of cars was stopped completely. Since then, Spain's shortage of dollars, pounds, marks, francs and lira—the world's only car-buying currencies—has kept purchases down to a trickle.

The day we decided a car would help us grow bananafied faster (stop laughing, please), Katie and I were hitch-hiking to another village some miles away. Though we walked a good bit of it, a handsome Canario in a neat little blue station wagon gave us a lift for the last lap.

"This car would be perfect for us!" exclaimed Katie, as we climbed out. There was uncommon excitement in her voice.

The driver, son of a banana planter, said it was a new German Ford and volunteered the price—a disarming practice of Canarios. They tell you the price of all their things and ask you the price of yours.

"Who's the dealer?" I asked.

"Angel Lenton."

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"Related to Arturo?"

"His brother."

The next day, I pushed and boarded Arturo's 1933 Opel and we went searching for Angel, who might be found almost anywhere, Arturo said, because of his widespread interests. Besides U.S., British, French and German Fords, he represented and sold, Lincolns, Mercurys, Fordson tractors, Ballantine's Scotch, Camels cigarettes and other products beyond our ken. He lived on and operated a large farm below the entrance to our Angostura Valley. We found him at a Las Palmas bar, sampling a delicious cheese made out of ewe's milk. Could he get us the car? Sure, if we would have dollars sent direct from America to the factory and accept an international license. This way I would buy direct from the factory with no dealer commission and no import duty. In three months it arrived by ship from Antwerp—tailored to our order.

The circumstances of this sales conference were Grand Canary at its best. Without pressure of time or competition, Angel and Arturo and I consummated the sale while Saro and her sister Pino sampled hors d'oeuvres and wine. Into the bar came Angel's teen-age son and daughter, then a ten-year-old daughter, then Mena, his wife.

"Let's have a pitcher of *Sangria*," Angel called to the bartender.

The teen-age girl said, "Oh, good—it's stupendous!"

"Sounds like blood," I said.

"Looks like blood, too," said Angel, comfortingly.

*Sangria* turned out to be a refreshing half-and-half mixture of well-iced dry red wine and soda, with a fillop of orange rind and sugar. It was accompanied by countless tiny platefuls of fried fish filets, hot shrimps pierced with toothpicks, cubed chunks of lamb in sauce, little rectangles and triangles of cheese

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from Grand Canary's village of Guia, cheese from Vilaflor on Tenerife, cheese from peninsular Spain, cheese from Holland. This went on for over an hour and finally broke up when Mena announced that dinner was ready up on the farm. Dinner, yet! I was too full to eat so much as a dessert. They asked me to bring the family to a "*merienda*" on the following Wednesday.

"Sounds merry," I said, "but what is it?"

"Tea," they said, "with a little music and dancing."

"Then you won't want the children."

"Of course—naturally—always!" said Mena. "There are usually more children than big folks!"

To call a Canario *merienda* a "tea" is understatement bordering on fabrication. It's a tea, picnic, buffet supper, cocktail party, dance and songfest, all rolled into one. As a means of meeting and getting to know people it's got the peripatetic American cocktail party skinned a mile. As a way to have fun with whole families joining in, the *merienda* is less hectic than the sometimes disastrous American picnic.

Angel sent his car for us. It was a big shiny 1947 American Ford Sedan which had traveled 135,000 miles entirely on Grand Canary. We entered the farm through a banana grove, then pulled up a crunchy drive made of small particles of black lava. An archway of grapes made it jungle-like. Suddenly Barry let out a shout, "There's Margie!" and almost before the car stopped the kids peeled out of it like clowns out of a circus coupe.

We toured the farm, petting animals, admiring handsome dogs, eating fruit from trees, picking flowers for the table and collecting souvenirs. The house had countless rooms leading off a large, densely planted patio. In one corner of the patio was a big table, informally set for twelve adults and teen-agers on a handsome hand-embroidered tea cloth. A maid brought tray-



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fuls of sandwiches, pastries, cake, and extra bread and butter and makings for anyone who wanted to spread his own.

At the far corner of the patio an arbor discreetly hid the fourteen small children while they bulldozed through mountains of goodies. Two maids hovered over them, gently settling disputes and whisking up the droppings before they got ground into the flagstones. At our table, sort of night-club style, we enjoyed three and a half hours of talking, singing, dancing and listening to records. Drinks were served about a half an hour after we finished. *Never*, we discovered, *before* eating. Angel and Mena did an exhibition tango. Saro sang a Canario song and accompanied herself on the ukulele. Manolo and Tole Conde did a folk dance, and when we realized that everyone was expected to contribute some talent, Katie and I dished up a fox trot from America's Terrible Thirties—reminiscent of the first we did together on army maneuvers at the Rockingham Country Club.

Manolo was a stern but *simpático* major in the Spanish Marines and operated two farms on the side. He had fought for Franco from the age of fifteen on the Gallician coast of the Peninsula and came to Grand Canary at war's end to meet and marry Tole, the beautiful blonde niece of Arturo and Angel. Though Tole knew only Spanish, Manolo spoke English, French, Russian and German as well. Our four kids quickly took to their four and it became a race to see who would learn the other's language first, though theirs had had a four-month head start with an English governess, so writes the father of the losing team.

The children joined in the dancing with little or no urging. Karen with towering Arturo, Brian with Tole and Barry with a beaming, pig-tailed Margie. John Doorly was there, too, with his mustache tips magnificently twirled, and as he and I watched the antics of the men with the children—now dancing—now in

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a game—he leaned close to me and said, “You know, these men in the Canaries have a wonderfully natural way with children. In England, most men feel a bit of a fool to carry on like this in front of other men.”

“I’m afraid that fits us in America, too,” I said. “We’d call it sissy, or kid-stuff.”

“That’s it,” said John, “but the important difference is that these men truly enjoy it. They know what the youngsters are thinking. They can talk to them. It’s not just a stunt with them. They’ve been living this sort of family atmosphere all their lives—they’ve never reacted against it.”

“... with our false he-man pose,” I added.

While the music feathered off into the palms and the pines and the night sky, lady-talk drifted to the inevitable: dress-makers, maids, labor pains, anesthesia, U.S. kitchens, hair-dressers, food, children and husbands.

Man-talk began with cars, and as all the makes of every car-making nation roamed the roads of Grand Canary, this monstrous subject was serialized from day to day or week to week.

“Which car were we talking about on Sunday?” puzzled Arturo. “Oh yes—the Chandler.” There were three Chandlers on Grand Canary, all dating back to the twenties.

Next we got to discussing the U.S. atom bomb tests’ “probable” (their version) or “possible” (my version) bad effect upon European weather. We moved on to Cervantes, the satirist, and to Perez Galdos and Blasco Ibanez, the historical novelists, then to argument pro and con Senator McCarthy’s way of dealing with Communists in government.

“Someday,” said Manolo Conde, “perhaps when it’s too late, the Americans who oppose McCarthy’s methods will discover how insidious Communists can be and how helpless one feels when he’s trying to fight something he can’t see. Then they’ll

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wish they had supported his strong-arm method when they were still *able* to support it."

"We make a lot of mistakes in America," I said, "but one thing we don't allow to go on very long is a little fellow being trampled by a big fellow."

"That's all very well," agreed Manolo, "but while all the talk is going on perhaps they get trampled by something that's grown bigger than both of them." He gripped my elbow with a deeply tanned hand, raised his eyebrows with a momentous pause and added, "Spain, you'll remember, is the only nation in history to win a war against the Communists."

Talk then moved to tailors, a subject almost as vital as McCarthyism because virtually all suits were made to order, and then to potatoes, (should they be planted in December?), then to the siesta and its effect upon the enjoyment of work, contact with family and preservation of health. There was no disagreement here.

"What impressed you the most?" I asked Katie when we were homeward bound at about 9:30.

"The whole atmosphere," she said. "It was spirited yet not charged or tense. People were confident of each other's respect without straining for it or showing off. The hostess, Mena, let the maids handle everything and she stayed with us. No jumping up and down. No calling of instructions. No nervous glancing around to see if anyone needs anything. No pleading with people to eat things they don't want. It all went so easily!"

"I like the timing of the drinks, too," I added. "Less strain on the amateur bartender."

"And not having to stack all those dishes in the dishwasher," threw in Katie, "nor shaking out that beautiful tablecloth and worrying about whether I could use it once more. No bustling hostess interrupting conversation by shoving things at you.

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And"—she laughed, "just think, even after all that—at ten they all sit down to supper!"

Katie's day in the Angostura was soon activated with a morning language class at the Massieu villa. It was Lolita's idea. Though she knew no English she would try to teach Spanish to Barry and Karen, Craig being too young and Brian still holding out for Dutch, and Katie could exercise her vocabulary by teaching English to Magdalena Leon. There were diversions aplenty, what with ten other children playing tag around the outdoor classroom, the many maids coming out for instructions and farm workers doing intriguing things to the nearby orange trees, but progress was made.

Katie found that Magdalena's interest in English arose from a desire to read American magazines. You have only to get stuck with a stack of foreign magazines—at the hairdresser's or barber's or somewhere—to appreciate the high-quality articles and photography and drawings and advertisements in America's first-class periodicals. Katie brought to "class" an issue each of *Life*, the *New Yorker* and the *Ladies' Home Journal*. Magdalena was beside herself with delight. *Life* was familiar to her. She had read the Spanish edition, minus advertisements, many times. The *New Yorker* puzzled her and when Katie struggled to translate the blurbs beneath the cartoons Magdalena plunged deeper and deeper into confusion.

*The Ladies' Home Journal* turned out to be an effective textbook. As Magdalena's life centered around home and family she found here the essence of American life as it would affect her. The huge full-color illustrations of cakes and salads and babies and gardens and dresses and furniture and appliances drove her to learn the American word-captions that described them. Question piled on question as she tried to piece this pic-

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ture-window America together with the sordid America of the divorce courts and teen-age gangs and highway slaughter and strike violence and election chicanery. Was one too high a price to pay for the other? She didn't know.

Katie glanced down at her long, tapering fingernails, the longest she'd had since school days and now unbroken for ten consecutive weeks. There was a tiny flaw in the polished surface of one nail, chipped while turning a page of the Spanish edition of *Babbitt*. Should she tell Magdalena about the perils of mechanical housekeeping? Just that morning a letter had arrived, saying that our clothes dryer in Haddonfield had broken down. The motor had been replaced for \$25, more than the combined monthly wages of five of the Massieu servants.

She then thought of the perils of raising a daughter in America. One of the magazines contained an article which dealt frankly with the question of petting and late dates. Should she translate this to Magdalena? Could she brush it off with the claim that American girls know how to take care of themselves? It was well she didn't, for not long afterward many Canarios were reading reviews and excerpts from the Kinsey Report.

Saro's reaction to these excerpts was an incredulous: "It can't be!" Katie's defense was a paraphrase of cartoonist Peter Arno: "Well you can be sure they didn't ask anyone in Haddonfield!" She could see that Saro was deeply disturbed. Of the many safeguards against promiscuity in Grand Canary Katie herself had experienced two. First, a man does not enter the house or car of another man's wife when she is alone, unless he has first obtained permission from her husband. At a party he will not even ask her to dance until he has asked the husband's approval. The first time such approval was asked of me, my reply was a stunned, incoherent double positive. "What? Of course—naturally—yes!" or something like that. He was a smoothie and

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so was his dancing and he could talk Spanish history like a man who had made it. After that my reply was a brief, "Yes," with a scarcely noticeable lowering of the right eyebrow. Second, a married woman does not wear suggestive clothing or make suggestive remarks. Third, a man does not carry on a long unbroken conversation with another man's wife, to the exclusion of others. At a formal party given by a Scot, an engaging and very important Canario millionaire got carried away in a deep discussion with Katie. "Look here!" called the jovial Scot from the other side of the room, "Katie's husband is watching with a jealous eye." This was untrue, it says here, and the Scot meant it only in fun, but the Canario gentleman blanched, then blushed, begged Katie's pardon, bowed across the room to me and melted into another group.

"I could have wrung his neck for saying that," Katie said of the host as we drove home, "we were just getting into a real meaty conversation."

"He was simply trying to keep the party moving," I suggested.

"It moved, all right," she said, "that fascinating man was so distressed he didn't say another word to me all evening—he didn't so much as *look* at me again."

These detours into the diverse facets of life in the two hemispheres did more to help Katie's Spanish than Magdalena's English. One day we were asked to bring Magdalena and Gregorio to a *merienda* given by the retired American couple who lived down near Las Palmas. Magdalena looked blankly at Katie and asked, "What on earth do I say to these people when I get there?"

"You're breaking my heart," groaned Katie, "haven't you learned anything through all these lessons?"

"But look," laughed Magdalena, "I can't go down there and

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talk nothing but picture captions from *The Ladies' Home Journal*."

Katie was forced to admit that her classwork had side-stepped the essential phrases of polite and meaningless conversation, so she drilled her pupil on the phrases: "Good afternoon, how are you?" and "Thank you for a very nice time!"

"So far so good," said Magdalena, after she had singsonged these two phrases to a point of mastery, "but what do I say in between?"

Katie thought for a minute. "Well," she said finally, "if you want to sound pro-American you could say that you like apple pie." It was agreed that whenever there would be a lapse in the conversation Katie would turn to Magdalena and ask in English, "What is your favorite dessert?" To this, Magdalena would reply in English, "Apple pie!"

Came the anticipated lull at the *merienda*. The two girls glanced at each other and broke out laughing. Katie finally composed herself enough to pose the question.

Magdalena straightened her face, looked toward the hostess and said "Pappa pie!"

Then it was the hostess' turn to join the laughter. "*Pappa*" is Canario for potato.

Barry and Karen's progress in Lolita's Spanish class showed up in little ways. They were obviously not intrigued with the idea of learning a new twenty-eight letter alphabet, a new set of numbers and some sounds that came from the throat instead of the tongue. But they began to talk pigeon palaver with the Leon and Camalich girls. And at the dinner table, when we reviewed the morning's accomplishments, I began to hear more and more Canario words for things happening on the farm. Suddenly Brian began to chime in with reports of his conver-

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sation with Fela in the kitchen. Then Craig told what Andres had said when he was pumping water. It was clear that our crew was ripe for some no-nonsense schooling.

There were three kinds of elementary schools on Grand Canary. Public schools dotted the countryside and backed up the government's emphasis upon compulsory education. Church-supported and private schools, both requiring a small tuition payment, were located in or near Las Palmas. Girls and boys were always educated separately and when our boys chivalrously said, "ladies first" we took Karen for a walk to see the Angostura's public school for girls. It was a one-room stone hut at the junction of two cactus-lined foot trails up-mountain from the yellow store. Karen, 250 per cent female and just pushing six, was not keen on walking by herself on one of these trails around the shoulder of the mountain. "Why can't the boys go to school with me?" she asked, plaintively rolling her big brown eyes, "we went together in Haddonfield!"

"Aw girls can't play the same as boys," said eighty-year-old Barry, obviously pleased at the prospect of an all-boy school.

"They get in the way," added seven-year-old Brian, twisting the knife into her bleeding little girl-heart. This was not a new observation for our Charles Addams child. Two years before, at the end of his first day in school, he had told Katie that the only thing wrong with school was that it was "all junked up with people."

"Karen," said Katie, "you'll have fun getting away from these roughnecks for a few hours every day."

Karen looked up gratefully but there lingered in her eyes the trace of a doubt that girl-play and girl-talk would ever be quite as much fun as boy-play and boy-talk.

The schoolroom was unoccupied when we entered but a shout brought the teacher, a pleasant middle-aged woman wear-



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ing a black dress and canvas farm-worker's shoes. She had no front teeth, so her Spanish sort of whished out and kept us busy grashping frantically at dangling partishiples. She had just been feeding the chickens and goats that were penned under and beside the schoolhouse and was pleased that we had paid her a call. She would be glad to enter Karen in the term beginning October 1, and although she spoke no English she felt that Karen would catch on just fine. There was just one problem. There were sixty girls in the school, aged from five to fourteen, and only forty-eight chairs. Would we mind sending along a chair or a fruit box for Karen to sit on? A dozen girls already sat on boxes. There was no electric light, of course, but daylight—Grand Canary's day-after-day of brilliant sunlight was enough to light the road to learning.

Katie looked over the first-grade text and workbooks and was reminded of her mother's books used in America at the turn of the century and gathering dust in an attic somewhere. She saw, too, that Karen would find the curriculum far ahead of ours in America. On the wall hung a map of Spain, a portrait of Mr. Franco, a reproduction of Raphael's *Madonna and Child* and a crucifix. A small blackboard listed the causes of the Spanish Civil War, or War of Liberation as it is now called. Several young barefoot girls wandered in and got warmly headpatted by the teacher. She told them about Karen and they giggled and ran off. She asked Karen a few questions which Katie translated and within ten minutes most of the strangeness was gone.

The boys' school was in Angostura village, more than a mile down the valley. It was slightly larger, owing to the greater importance attached to educating boys, but even so was covered by but one teacher. When this genial gent wasn't teaching his eighty pupils six days a week, he served on Fridays as the valley's

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only butcher and on other days operated a sort of fruit and vegetable exchange in the cellar of the school.

The hours of the Angostura's public schools were geared to local need. The school year extended from October 1 to August 15. Christmas vacation sometimes stretched to a month, Easter vacation was two weeks, summer classes were cut short at mid-day, and throughout the year many fiestas superseded school-work. Farm work, too, sometimes dominated school hours. If there was a big crop to bring in, for instance, it was a case of reaping before writing and gofio before geography.

"It's all the same to me," a boy said one day, "I just have to finish today's schoolwork tomorrow or some other day." The Canario system allowed every child to progress more or less at his own speed. This proved vital, we discovered later, to the early struggles of the young Americans.

It seemed unfair to unload three non-Spanish-speaking foreigners upon the already bowed shoulders of the Angostura's public servants, so we piled the kids on the Golden Bus and headed for our landlord's private school in Las Palmas. He welcomed us warmly and arranged for two lady teachers to teach Barry, Brian and Karen how to read and write Spanish. He predicted that in this one month, the vacation month of September, the kids would learn enough to qualify them for the opening of regular classes in October. Tuition for all three, for three hours a day six days a week, totaled \$7.50 a month.

This venerable building, which had seen the education of much of the Las Palmas upper class, had no grounds but was built around a center court of palms, geraniums and fishponds. The corridors looked as if they'd just managed to survive a shooting war but were lined with busts and torsos of classic statuary. Creaking steps rose to classrooms and to the third-floor roof which served for leg-stretching at recess. The kids' room

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was a model of casual charm. Chairs and tables were helter-skelter and the teachers sat anywhere the spirit moved them. One window was uncurtained, the other two supported pieces of waterpipe hung with forlorn material spotted interestingly with unmatched patches. The blackboard was simply a plaster wall painted black and over its center a peeling but beautifully-carved crucifix dangled at an angle. From another wall an unpainted cupboard swayed from a single fastening, and a painted seascape punctuated the beauties of island life.

The teachers, who spoke no English and had never taught foreigners anything, first lit into the good old twenty-eight letter Spanish alphabet with its "ah-bey-ee-y-dey-ey-effe-hay" and the kids groaned.

"Why don't they use the *real* alphabet?" demanded Brian after the first day. "These crazy sounds just make everything harder." Katie's explanation that the Spanish alphabet was drawn up before the English fell on unbelieving ears. After all, the kids reasoned, they'd known the English one way back when they were born. But singsong memory work appealed to them and the sounds were soon mastered.

Cursive writing came next. Barry had learned American cursive in the second grade and had only to cope with some sharp differences in letter formation. Even numbers were different. Ones looked like sevens, sevens looked like fours and twos and threes were fancied up with curlicues. Brian and Karen had learned only to print in America. This surprised the headmaster and teachers. Canario kids learn to print at three or four and tackle cursive at five. So our underprivileged six-and seven-year-olds tried first with tears, then with success, to make up a year's cursive in a month.

For the first few days Katie and I alternated going to class with the kids, while four-year-old Craig stayed home to work

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around the yard with Andres and go to the store with Fela and play with Gregorio and Magdalena's three-year-old Gregorito. Our function was to translate the teachers' questions, and sometimes while we painstakingly traced down clues in our dictionary both teachers and pupils lost interest and began talking or playing with kids who wandered in from other parts of the school. We suggested locking the door against these curious intruders but the teachers were unperturbed. Reciting before a standing audience of mumbling strangers is part of one's education in Grand Canary. Certainly it's good training for one's gambits at the sidewalk cafe or on the crowded *paseo*. The teachers glided through this turbulence with the calm of a pair of queens. One devoted herself to embroidering lace on a blue satin nightgown for her trousseau. She could correct mistakes in recitation without looking up and without missing a stitch of her intricate embroidery.

Came the first day of regular school. Karen was to go into a class of twenty girls and a curriculum roughly parallel to our first grade; Barry and Brian into a second grade class with twenty-eight other boys aged six to nine. Barry, heady with success, announced that after Spanish he would go on to conquer French, German and Italian. Brian looked dourly at the cavernous school entrance that yawned before him and said flatly that he didn't want to go in. This wasn't *his* country, *his* language or *his* school. He still wanted to learn Dutch.

"But that's not your language either," said Katie.

"All the same," said Karen, "we know so much Dutch already we might as well learn the rest."

Karen adapted well and wanted to conform. Finding the girls in white blouses and gray flannel skirts to their knees, she asked the same for herself. Katie compromised by lengthening her American skirts. By mid-December, Karen had filled nine

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notebooks with reading tests, penmanship, spelling, numbers, art and geography and brought home a first-grade report card with a Phi Beta Kappa average: four tens and a nine on the academic side, twelve tens for conduct and attitude.

The boys found thorns in their paths. They came out wide-eyed with stories of knuckle-rapping with rulers and kneeling in the corner with arms outstretched. Katie found a red welt on Barry's arm and barely suppressed a cry of outrage. "Who did that?" she demanded, steeling herself to take the school apart stone by stone.

Barry gave a neat little Canario shrug. "I deserved it," he said.

The American press had given us the impression that Spain was a nationalistic police state, so we were prepared for lots of marching, saluting and anthem-singing in the schools. But if this is the badge of nationalism, the Canarios don't wear it. In our landlord's school there was no marching of any kind, no pledge of allegiance, no flag, no anthem-singing. Spain, we were told, had had no official anthem since the Civil War. One very stirring march, called *The National Hymn*, was played by radio stations when they signed off but it took us several days to find someone who knew the words. All four of our kids promptly learned them, pronounced the anthem better than the *Star Spangled Banner* and proceeded to sing it to startled but pleased Canarios.

The boys began getting homework—writing and memory assignments full of dreary definitions of self-evident grammar terms. One night we came across Barry mumbling to himself in the pale glow of a lamp. His finger was inserted between the pages of a closed book. Over and over he was saying: "*Cuando hablamos expresamos nuestros pensamientos por medio de las palabras.*"

"What's all that?" I asked.

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Barry looked at me with disdain. "It says what talking is," he explained. "In English it means 'when we speak we express our thoughts by means of words.'"

Farther down the page was another jawbreaker for six-to-nine-year olds. "*El conjunto de palabras y modos de hablar de una nacion forma su idioma o lengua.*" Translated: "The joining of words or mode of speaking of a nation forms its language or tongue."

Barry plowed into this one and got stuck in the middle. Big tears rose silently from his uplifted eyes. "If I don't have this whole page memorized by tomorrow," he said, "the teacher'll beat me with a ruler!"

He memorized that page, and more that followed, and by then we realized that he and Brian were doing different work and progressing at different speeds within the same class. The teacher seemed to know just how much each could take. Brian's work took a sudden turn for the better after he noticed a slinky little brunette in the girls' second grade. One day, after his class had gone in, he was found wandering through the corridors in search of this girl. His teacher, herself first-class whistlebait, sensed a good thing. In return for extraordinary effort in classwork she offered Brian escorted tours into the girls' section and an introduction to the young beauty.

Brian was grateful but cautious. "I don't wanta talk to her," he said, "I just wanta look at her."

Several days later he came home and asked Katie if she would invite the girl to spend Sunday at Villa La Solana.

"What's her name?" asked Katie.

Brian looked surprised. "I dunno," he said.

"Where does she live?"

"I dunno," said Brian again. "All I know is I like her and she likes me and she has soft hair and I wanta up here."

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"How do you know she likes you? Has she said so?"

"No. I just know."

"Does this mean," continued Katie, with woman's instinctive protection of womankind, "that you don't love Marylee any more?"

Brian looked up suddenly as if he'd been pinched. "But she's over *there*," he said, "and this girl's over *here*."

The car arrived in mid-October, but until then school punctuated Katie's day with the round trip to Las Palmas on the Golden Bus. After depositing the kids at school at 9:30 she usually walked down to the big market and joined Saro Lenton or Tole Conde for a shopping binge. By now the market had lost for her its awesome confusion. She now knew that bread was sold in the egg stalls, butter was sold by the cheese men and potatoes and meat and fish and bananas were sold separately. She knew that you had to queue up for bananas because these—at 2½¢ a pound—were even cheaper than at the plantations. Her Spanish had grown more versatile by the day. She had dropped her aversion to bargaining and could shout "*bandito!*" at the vendors in the approved Canario manner. Even the smiling fishmonger, the one who spoke to her so clearly and patiently that first day, noticed the change in her.

"You're just as bad as the rest of them," he said sadly. "You used to pay any price I asked. Now you want my fish for nothing."

Much of this new-found skill could be traced to the example set by Saro. "Who could make a salad out of that?" sputtered Saro to a vegetable stall-keeper one day, "it's not even fit for locusts!" Katie reported that the lettuce in question was not bad at all—just a little brown on the edges—but the marked price came down for Saro.

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Tole, too, had a keen sense of value and a photographic mind that registered shops and stalls and artisans and prices like an electrically-lit contour map. To her, as to others in her circumstances, buying was an art which had no connection with one's ability to pay. Her father was a Diezsaavedra, her mother was a Lenton, her husband the deputy commandant of Grand Canary's Marine Infantry. Her three-hundred-thousand peseta town house in the Vegueta quarter lay idle while she lived in a nine-room apartment and drew produce from two farms. She had a cook, a housemaid, a nursemaid, an English governess and a butler-chauffeur. (American leathernecks will be interested to hear that the nursemaid, whose assignment was the care and feeding of eight-month-old Raphael Conde, was a private first-class in the Spanish Marine Infantry.) Tole herself had the bearing of a princess, the good looks of a movie star and the warm inner beauty of a mother of four children. To her there was nothing strange about being handed down by the chauffeur from her shiny, black, hundred-thousand-peseta Citroen sedan; then arrestingly radiant with her soft blonde hair, tanned complexion and couturier clothes to step into a shop and fight like a wildcat over a two peseta saving in a blouse-length of broadcloth or a slab of cheese. This is as much a point of honor as scrubbing one's white marble steps in Baltimore. It is also one way the Canario housewife avoids debt and money worries.

Katie's schoolday morning might also include a visit to the dressmaker with Tole, a stop at Saro's house for coffee and music, or a bus ride by herself to the Cafe Casablanca in the port where under the palms in the square she'd join English friends taking a coffee break from Consul Miller's shipping company. Shortly after noon she would pick up a loaf of warm bread at a back-street bakery, bus back to meet the kids at school, walk down to the dry river bed and catch the crowded



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one o'clock Golden Bus to the Angostura. Craig and I, often after a walk through the cane-brakes to see his favorite friend at "the pump house way-far-away," would meet the bus at the foot of the drive and carry packages and hear the news from the capital.

My day to take the kids to school was usually more varied, though I tried to keep it as bananafied as Katie's. On one such day I arose, coldwater shaved and dressed at 6:30. Karen ran in to say she'd found a five peseta note under her pillow. This had been left by the Canario "angels," a specially subsidized subsidiary of American elves and fairies, in exchange for the tooth she'd lost the day before. Barry, with arithmetic throbbing importantly through his brain, calculated that the angels were two or three cents more generous than the fairies, depending upon which rate of exchange you operated in. Craig came in to get his back scratched, then Brian called in that he'd like to hear the French, German and Spanish national anthems on my harmonica. This recital was concluded by seven, and the rest of the day went about like this:

7:00 to 8:15 Write letters.

7:30 Josefa arrives to dress the kids for school. Fela starts breakfast.

8:15 Fela sounds the breakfast call for grownups only. Bananas, French toast, gofio and coffee.

8:30 Children called to breakfast. Craig asks me to bring a surprise from town.

8:55 Wander down mountain to main road. Katie and Craig lean over arbor wall and sing *So Long, It's Been Good to Know You*. Talk with Massieu's camel driver, Andres and an attractive girl who sweeps her front walk for an

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hour or so every morning in order to talk with passers-by and bus-waiters-for like us.

- 9:05 Board Golden Bus and talk with Howard Hughes between fare collections. He lets the three kids ride for the price of two.
- 9:45 Leave kids at school in Las Palmas. See secondhand, two-week-old copy of *New York Times* International Edition, published in Amsterdam, hanging in doorway of bookshop. Bargain for it and get it for twelve cents—no bargain.
- 9:55 Buy five-quart can of sunflower oil for cooking. Too heavy for Katie to carry yesterday.
- 10:00 Stopped on street by hail from Manolo and Tole Conde riding tandem on his motorcycle—he in his white marine officer's uniform, she in green-and-white peppermint stick print that flares gaily in the wind. They take me to place where we can buy a fifth of gin for seventy cents and excellent cognac for a dollar. Discuss book both Manolo and I have just read.
- 10:30 Leave them and pick up processed photos at a photo lab.
- 10:40 Encounter Canario lawyer friend, host at a fiesta supper last week. Have coffee with him and ask him to bring his wife to have tea with us at Villa La Solana next Thursday. "What time?" he asks. "Three-thirty," say I, knowing that he doesn't go to his office on Monday, Thursday, Friday or Saturday afternoons. "Too early," he says, "by then we are just finishing dinner." "Then how's four-thirty," I offer. "Five-thirty will be fine," he says. (They arrived at six-thirty.)
- 11:35 Take bus to port. Stop by British Consulate for mail. One letter and six mailing pieces, two of which advertise Philadelphia sales of fur coats. Consul Miller chides

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me about how our atomic bomb tests have ruined Britain's weather and driven the American tourists away. He has just read my freighter article and notes that I did not include British freighters on the "specially recommended" list. "You're right," he says, "I've had the story copied and mailed to our people in London. May shake them up a bit."

- 11:50 Step across street to see Arturo. Discuss advisability of having his Opel car repainted for \$5. Plan swimming party for Friday.
- 12:10 Cross square to ask Angel Lenton when our car will be shipped. No news.
- 12:15 Watch a mason building a brick barrier around storefront about to be remodeled. This would cost a fortune in U.S. but is cheaper than wood here. Every wooden crate and box is re-used for lumber here.
- 12:25 See Spanish production manager of film company now shooting *Tirma*, a technicolor movie about the conquest of the island. He explains shooting schedule so that family can visit various scenes on location.
- 1:00 Buy warm bread, meet kids and board bus for Angostura. Sit next to American Protestant missionary whose mission is licensed by the Catholic Franco government to make happy Protestants out of miserable Catholics. I ask if, in a society 99 per cent Catholic, he sometimes feels a little snowbound. He says not, because God is on his side.
- 1:40 Craig, bareback and barefoot, meets bus and says he was bad only once so can he still have the surprise? As I have forgotten it, this misdemeanor makes him ineligible.
- 1:50 Dinner of *puchero* beef stew, tossed salad, fresh crusty bread and Fela's mysterious pudding.

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- 2:30 Tea on terrace. Katie reads aloud two-week-old items from *New York Times* while I lie in sun on rock wall.
- 2:45 Santa Brigida postboy, fifteen years old, arrives with three letters. Hangs his mail pouch on a bougainvillea vine and plays with kids in courtyard.
- 3:15 Barry arrives with my harmonica. I pick out tunes while kids build houses in their miniature Guanche village and listen.
- 4:00 Andres arrives from his siesta and says folks in the valley have been sitting in their doorways listening to the harmonica music. Some up to a half-mile away. "Wind's blowing that way," he explains knowingly.
- 4:15 Brian calls from out of the cactus somewhere, "Hey—here's a dead rat, a giant one!" As we were about ready to change to another brand of rat poison this is great news. Whole family visits rat and Brian proposes that we "cut 'im open to see if he's got duckie inside." This is vetoed with shudders. Karen proposes a funeral. Andres fetches gravedigger's hoe. Brian picks up rat with stick and off goes procession.
- 4:30 Read.
- 6:00 Write.
- 6:30 Eugenio comes by to say that four Italian youths, en-route across the Atlantic to Brazil in a 25-foot sailboat, are coming to see him at the Massieu house and would we like to drop up later?
- 7:00 Supper of fried eggs on rice, tomatoes eaten like apples, bread and jam, cocoa, fresh figs.
- 7:30 Josefa bathes all four kids in washtub in kitchen and beds down Karen and Craig. Barry and Brian do homework until 8:30.
- 8:30 Still in our jeans and polo shirts, we walk up to Massieus.

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Everybody is there. Eugenio tries in vain to dissuade young sailors from making the hazardous crossing without knowledge of celestial navigation. (They made it.) Mussolini and Franco are compared and contrasted. It is agreed that if Mussolini had been as smart as Franco and had avoided the alliance with Hitler he might still be alive and dictating today. Gregorio explains why the Spanish are not good democracy material. "Democracy," he says, "requires cold, sober people like the Swedes. People who do not think with their hearts." The guitar music starts, then singing in four languages, then storytelling. Lolita sings *One Fine Day* from *Madame Butterfly* in Italian. Also arias from *Tosca* and *La Boheme*. We close with *So Long It's Been Good to Know You*. The sailors are wished "bien viaje" and we sing our way back down the mountain to find that it is  
2 A.M.

In early October I flew to Rome to photograph the Knights of Malta, meeting from all over the world, and to do some research on the story about Eugenio. Then on to the Isle of Malta to interview Admiral Mountbatten, who was about to become Britain's First Sea Lord, and to collect information about the six-nation NATO headquarters there. Katie, however, took a dim view of being left for two weeks with four kids and no car in the Angostura.

"Don't worry," I said, "if our car doesn't come I'll ask Angel to find somebody to rent you one." It sounded easy. We had rented one in Morocco. There were rental places all over Europe.

"No such places in the Canaries," said Angel, "every car is

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in use. But leave it to me. I have some friends who'd be glad to help out. How many hours a day should the driver be on call?"

"None at all," I said, "Katie will do her own driving."

"Oh," groaned Angel as if he'd been blackjacked, "she drives." He was silent for a moment, then half to himself he mumbled, "A woman driver." There was no expression in his voice.

"What's wrong with that?" I asked, feeling our cause slipping away as if in quicksand, "She's an excellent driver!" I was about to add, "Better than lots of men!" but realized just in time how hollow and unconvincing—even insulting—it would sound.

"Look," said Angel, "you and I know that Katie is an extraordinary woman. If you say she's a good driver I'll believe you. But I'm afraid the car owners won't. On Grand Canary I think you could count on one hand the number of women who drive. Can't you persuade her to take a driver?"

"No," I said, "she doesn't have that kind of running around to do. She just wants a car sitting there, twenty-four hours a day, so she can take off whenever she wants to or needs to. For instance, something might happen to one of the kids."

Angel had seen enough Hollywood movies to know that many American women have this fantastic sort of freedom. "Well," he said finally, "I'll see what I can do." The next day five men brought their cars to his office. One was in urgent need of cash. But when Angel was forced to reveal, as casually as he could, that the car would be driven by a woman, all five applicants turned him down. "You can see how they feel," he said later. "When a car is wrecked here you can't replace it. Even with collision insurance, which very few owners carry, you can't buy a new car until you get another import license. This may take years."

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"But that presupposes," I said, "that a woman is more likely to wreck a car than a man."

"Yes," agreed Angel pleasantly, "it does."

Our car arrived ten days later, while I was still away, so it fell to Katie's lot to go to Customs in the port and take delivery. Dock workers and passers-by swarmed around the car. It was an eye-catching little buggy. But the real eyeful came when a *woman* slipped behind the wheel. Beneath her surface calm was an undertow of panic. The gearshift was strange. The clutch caught at a different place. The four-cylinder motor gave a foreign feel to the accelerator. And around her were at least fifty men, waiting for her to make her first mistake. She could already hear the talk in the bars. "A woman?" "Yeh, a woman."

Fortunately the car started at the turn of the key, like our Plymouth, but when she let in the clutch the motor coughed, struggled and died. Blood surged up beneath her collar. She felt like shouting, "Go away—all of you!" But she had not reckoned on the chivalry of Canario men. Not a sound came from the onlookers—at least not until she was gone. On her way to a gas pump, and on up to the Angostura she saw people nudging each other and nodding in her direction. One voice said, "My God—look—a woman driving!" But no one laughed. She stopped to pick up an overburdened, pleasant-looking old woman who lived in the caves. The woman refused with profuse thanks. Katie insisted. The woman shrugged with a smile of resignation, made the sign of The Cross and climbed in. When faced with our steep, narrow, rutted, fenceless bedspring drive, Katie realized with a new ache that now the eyes of the Angostura were upon her. Even a cab driver had called it the worst road in his experience, and demanded extra fare. But she made it, with no backs or fills on the jackknife curves and no

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encounters with rocks or camels or mules or cactus. While the kids ran all over the car like monkeys, and Fela and Josefa stared scarcely believing their eyes, Katie slumped into an easy chair and thought untranslatable thoughts of her husband—probably munching hors d'oeuvres at a governor's reception three thousand miles away.

My absence brought out some of the hidden affection and understanding that lies deep in the Canario character. Gregorio and Magdalena had promised me, without telling Katie, that instead of moving back to their town house on October first they would prolong their stay in the Angostura until my return. They stopped by Villa La Solana almost every evening and when Craig's knee became infected Gregorio doctored it twice a day. Other friends made special trips up from Las Palmas. Andres made his presence felt long into the evenings and Fela and Josefa offered to sleep in the villa, but by then Katie knew that when people were so wonderful everything was bound to be all right.

Nor did kindness end there. Gregorio and Magdalena, who had no car, offered to accompany Katie in hers to meet my midnight plane at Gando, an hour's drive through the mountains. She suggested that Gregorio drive, then realized from his reply that he had intended to all along. The next day we discovered that Arturo and Saro had met the 1 A.M. airport bus in Las Palmas, on the chance that Katie might be there alone.

Like most people, we had read about invasions of African locusts, the pests that darken the sky and strip the leaves and fruit from every plant in their path. But we never expected to confront them in the rich and tranquil fields of Grand Canary. Sometime in October a few billion locusts got into a huddle on



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an African beach and called signals for a mass plunge in our direction. They glued themselves into a huge ball, it seems, and rolled into the sea. The outer layers of players perished from exposure but their bodies acted as a shield for the others. A seasonal wind switch blew them onto the sandy southeast shore where the ball broke into sections and released all of the sealed-in live locusts to gorge themselves on man's fragile, vulnerable and delectable bounty. One captain reported that his ship had narrowly missed colliding with "an island more than a mile across." When a spot like an island appeared on his radar screen, the captain rang the engines into reverse, swung the helm hard over and recalculated his position to make sure the ship was on course. It was, and after a detour he proceeded to Las Palmas to report that a new island had thrust its rocky crown out of the sea.

A fisherman was said to have reported a giant ball of seaweed bobbing in the surf. A boy got up early and saw a "formation of enemy bombers" heading inland from the ocean.

However they may have come, the invaders attacked first the vital tomato fields from Maspalomas to Telde then advanced up the narrow defile of the Angostura like a chill fog. Bonfires started up, children began to yell, housewives banged on kettles and pan lids. Locusts don't like smoke or noise, Andres told us. With fuel so scarce, we waited until we could see the blacks of their eyes, then Andres, Fela and the six of us started three smudgy fires in strategic spots and for once we urged the kids to shout to their hearts' content. They did not fail. But when the full force of the invasion reached us, ramming our faces and bare backs and plowing crazily into our hair, all the kids but Craig took cover in the arbor and shouted from behind vines and posts. Four-year-old Craig ran screaming up and down the driveway, battling the invaders with his bare fists, stomping on

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them, sweeping them off the geraniums and squeezing his eyes so tightly shut that tears ran in rivulets down his dusty cheeks. For him it was the goodies against the baddies. No TV hero could champion a worthier cause.

The Canarios call locusts "lobsters" or "cigars." Both terms are accurate. They are lobster-colored with a cigar-shaped fuselage three inches long, and have sharp spines on their rear legs that prick the skin. Quadruple wings give them the speed of a jet, combined with the maneuverability of a helicopter. The trees around our courtyard grew pink with them as they gobbled and sucked like thousands of little vacuum cleaners. Barry threw rocks into the trees to shake them off but only a direct hit would do. They banged against the windows like hailstones. When a door was left open they flew into the house and zipped about like bats. After two hours of full-scale battle they shifted their main attack to the Massieu's upper orange grove and cornfield.

"Let's go fight 'em up there," someone suggested.

"Can't," said Brian, "gotta collect the bodies." But his was a hopeless job. The ground, as far as eye could see was pink with corpses.

"I killed eighty-seven," called Barry.

"I got fifty-six," chimed in Karen, "how many did you kill Craig?"

"Dunno," said our hero, "I can't count that much."

We grabbed a quick lunch American-style and shifted operations to the Massieu's orange grove. No one was there but the locusts. They were riddling the corn like buckshot and moving into the oranges. For another two hours we kept them in continual unrest. Seven kids from the Massieu household left their sand pile and joined ours with oil drums and tin cans.

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"I know what just a small part of this noise does to *my* digestion," gasped Katie. "The locusts made a terrible mistake when they came to *this* farm."

Gregorio and Magdalena and Eugenio and Lolita came home from Las Palmas in the fifth hour of the invasion. They stood by the car and stared like spectators at a trapshoot. As this was the first invasion in many years the experience was almost as strange to them as to us.

"It's total ruin," said Magdalena calmly.

"Nothing to do but wait," added Lolita, "and hope they go away."

Gregorio watched us charging through the orange grove, waving palm fronds like Indian punkahs. He kidded Katie for the smoke smudges on her face and the grass cuts on her legs. He laughed at the way Gregorito was copying the antics of Craig.

Eugenio scowled his dark Italian scowl as the invaders hovered and dived and zoomed into his leather jacket. But he made no move, nor did he speak to the half-dozen farm workers who sat talking in a group a short distance away.

I relaxed my grip on a palm frond and nudged Katie. "You know," I panted, "I'm beginning to feel a little silly."

"You'd think these oranges belonged to us," laughed Katie. Then a look of resolution came back over her face and she marched up to Eugenio.

"What's the matter," she scolded, "you in league with the locusts?"

"Yes," said Eugenio, smiling for the first time, "my grandmother was a locust."

Katie then lit into him in a forthright manner that no man on earth could have gotten away with. With wild waving of arms

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and shaking of head and stamping of feet she pointed out how many plants and trees had been saved by energetic human agitation. She showed that the fig trees up-mountain, beyond the scope of our work, were stripped almost bare. The corn attacked before our arrival was infinitely worse-hit than the oranges. Already the people of the valley were relaxing their vigilance and gossiping in doorways. What was The Leader going to do—fight, or face the high-price winter markets with empty fields?

I happened to have a movie camera full of color film to record this dramatic moment, and when months later we projected the reel at a family *merienda* in Las Palmas, Leons, Lentons and Massieus all roared with merriment. There was Katie in shorts and polo shirt and broad-brimmed farmerette hat, gesticulating like an octopus while Eugenio, in his slick hair, dark airplane glasses and even darker scowl, stared off into the holocaust that formed a moving backdrop for the film. Whether this dressing-down helped to bring the more earnest activity that followed we shall never know. Perhaps all along Eugenio was plotting his line of resistance. At any rate, everyone went to work and within two or three hours the locust horde had retreated to the mountain tops and a dehydrated diet of heather and scrub. And when the oranges grew big and ripe the following spring Eugenio sent us down a crateful with his compliments.

To celebrate the victory we threw together an impromptu *merienda* for the neighbors and sat sipping on the patio while the great pink band of locusts kept at their gluttonous work in the fading light from the setting sun.

"Hey look—an airplane on fire!" shouted Brian, running up the trail from the Guanche village. It was a single engine fighter plane with Spanish military markings. A long spume of smoke trailed from the fuselage as she flew up the middle of the valley.

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We remembered then that the Minister of Agriculture had promised to rush DDT to our stricken area.

"Here comes half of the Spanish Air Force," said Gregorio soberly.

"The other half is still over the fields of the Count of Vega Grande," gagged Eugenio. "This is just a souvenir for the little people of the Angostura." Eugenio knew as well as any of us that the Count's vast tomato fields were much more vulnerable and vital to the island's economy than anything in the Angostura. But he sometimes got a grim satisfaction from mocking communist talk. He hated Communism and everything it stood for with every fiber in his body. His brother had been taken from his Italian home in 1945 and murdered by the Yugoslav partisans. The Italian partisans molested other members of his family, murdered his friends and caused to be brought against him a charge of collaboration with Germany, from which he was later acquitted. The absence of communists from either the public or private life of Grand Canary was an important reason for making it his home.

The DDT plane made one circuit of the valley, missing entirely the mountaintop area then occupied by the locusts.

"Up there—up there!" we shouted and beckoned to the pilot. He swooped low over the villa, dipped his wings, turned off the sprayer and headed again for the lowlands. The next morning the locusts—their sleep undisturbed by harsh chemicals—returned to the lower reaches of the valley. But gone was the youthful verve of yesterday. Some seemed loggy with food and allowed themselves to be batted down with a fly swatter. Others flew around in circles and gradually left. Rumors reached us that damage was much greater elsewhere—a ten acre lemon grove stripped to the wood, an alfalfa field wiped out and covered with swarming bodies to a depth of nineteen inches, a

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ship that couldn't sail because the decks and hawsers and capstan winches were layered with the "flying lobsters."

Katie gave the credit to the eleven kids. "Only a human could put up with that racket," she said, "and locusts definitely aren't human."

The weather continued beautiful through October and into November—day after day of 75-degree sunshine, with low humidity and cool nights. "How can you call this 'weather,'" someone asked one day, "*when there is no weather?*" Canarios don't greet each other with conversation about the weather. You sound pretty foolish saying, "It's a fine day, isn't it?" when all the days for weeks and months have been perfect.

But late in November, just when we were beginning to wonder if we'd ever get our seven-inch annual rainfall, we got it—all in three days. Rain ripped rivers in the mountainsides, stripped terraced fields of their retaining walls, turned the Angostura's dry river bed into a torrent of liquid topsoil. A cliff collapsed and blocked the road to Santa Brigida. The road to Las Palmas yawned twice and gargantuan gulps of asphalt were swallowed whole by the greedy stream. A stone house crumbled and slid into the lower road and killed a family of four.

"No school!" shrieked Brian, and the cry was passed from lip to lip.

"No bread," announced Fela. Both the green store and the yellow store had run out of groceries.

"Plenty of water," said Andres, grinning through his beard. "The cistern is full and flowing over." He stood there chuckling to himself.

"What's so funny?" I asked.

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"I was just thinking," he said, "that the landlord must be very angry that he *bought* us all that water last week!"

The Massieu house had been closed and the whole gang had moved to Las Palmas for the winter. Their camel stood forlornly in his flooded shed, dreaming perhaps of better days when he'd been properly parched in his native Sahara. Cactus plants, with one for the road, reeled drunkenly down the mountainside. Reports from elsewhere said that roofs were leaking freely. The valley people went on with their daily rounds despite the downpour. They were wet to the skin around the clock, what with no fireplaces or heating stoves to dry their clothes, but seemed complaisant—even happy about it. Some wore potato sacks over their heads, but these acted more as a filter than a hood. Even the cave dwellers, with the driest homes on the island, chose to leave this comfort to wander in the great wet outdoors. Months more passed before rain visited us again, and then only at night, so our neighbors were making the most of it. Back came the sun for three winter months that were even warmer and brighter than summer. And before we knew it Christmas was upon us.

What child has not dreamed of a year with two Christmases? For ours, this dream came true, with a third thrown in for good measure. The Canaries lie too far from the North Pole and R. H. Macy to fall on the route of Santa Claus, so December 25 is reserved for religious observance and a family feast. But by January 6 the Three Kings have made their journey from the Holy Land, bearing gifts for good young Canarios. Meanwhile, Britain's Father Christmas has finished his chores up London way and has headed south by the best available winter transportation to take care of his subjects in the far-flung outposts. Consul Miller predicted that the old boy would get to Las

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Palmas' British Club on December 29, and fortunately for Consul Miller he did.

Our kids were reasonable about all this. They could see that England and the Holy Land were much closer to Grand Canary. And besides, explained Barry, with those three children renting our house in Haddonfield you couldn't expect Santa Claus to cover us too. It was agreed that on December 25 we would have a small tree and open gifts sent over by American friends, who naturally expected them to be opened on December 25. On December 29 we would have tea at the British Club and see what Father Christmas might bring. On January 6 the kids would leave a pair of carefully cleaned and polished shoes by the door and await the bounty of the Orient. These shoes, by the way, must be stuffed with hay to refresh the Three Kings' camels.

"*That* little tiny bit?" exclaimed Brian, who had watched Eugenio's camel demolish a two-foot pile of hay in nothing flat, "let's feed 'em *good*."

Only some fast talking kept him from turning the living room into a manger. The Canarios, however, do build mangers in their living rooms. Each family builds a creche, reproducing the infant Jesus, surrounded by Mary, Joseph and the Three Kings. Some occupy as little space as a square foot, some take up the whole end of a room with figures almost life-size.

All apprehension that Christmastime homesickness might set in was swept away by a surprise visit from "our family"—Arturo and Saro, Gregorio and Magdalena, Manolo and Tole, and Alberto and Tere Cabré, with all their children, the Sunday before Christmas Number One. Many parties were lined up for the holiday season. The first was a breakfast at Tole's after midnight mass at 1:45 Christmas morning. Saro's sister Pino Ley helped Katie buy a black lace mantilla, as Canario women



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never wear hats unless they're working in the fields. Pino and I watched her adjust the delicate piece over her "gingerhair" and could tell from the stars in her eyes that this was fulfillment of a lifetime's longing.

Fela overheard the invitations and offered to stay through Christmas Eve with the children.

"But I don't want to keep you from midnight mass and your own family," Katie protested.

"I will be here for many, many Christmases," said Fela with a gentle smile. "You may be here but once."

Tole asked each lady guest to contribute her best dish. Katie chose apple pie, though she had to roll the crust with an empty Scotch bottle and bake it in Saro's oven while at mass. We ate, danced and sang until 4:30 A.M. and even then the streets of balmy Las Palmas were a-hum with promenaders, singing, playing ukes and guitars and talking spiritedly of the gay days to come.

My Christmas surprise for the family was three days of electricity at Villa La Solana. With the help of an electrician from the English film company then shooting *Moby Dick* I doped out a 114-volt circuit, using fourteen car batteries hooked up in series. These were loaned by two garage owners, friends of Angel Lenton, who were supposed to be recharging them for fourteen unsuspecting motorists. A maze of wires connected the batteries under our grand piano with two full-size light bulbs hanging from the ceiling, a string of miniature colored lights on our pine-bough tree and "Astral," the long-longed-for refrigerator.

For Christmas dinner Katie vetoed turkey on the grounds that she couldn't bear to walk up to a live bird in the market, feel her thigh and yell "off with her head!" She opened a canned ham from Portugal, instead, and the reaction which began as

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a protest grew into a cheer. Mashed potatoes, tossed salad, tangerines, nuts and candy completed the menu.

After a nap we drove to Arturo's for a family *merienda*. Expecting only host, hostess and five children to greet us, instead we found *all* the Lentons and Leons—twenty-five adults and twenty-two children. Far from being the ratrace you might expect, it was a smooth and wonderful Christmas Day finale for everyone from grandmothers down to fourteen-month-old twins. Fathers danced with each others' daughters, mothers conducted a recitation bee where every child recited a poem or song or story he'd learned in the past year. Our kids now felt pretty much at home in their new language. Even Craig raced up to us shouting, "That boy talked to me, and I talked to him—he's my friend!"

Father Christmas arrived at the British Club on time and enjoyed a brief moment of glory before the arrival of Gregory Peck. The film star, whose *Roman Holiday* in Spanish had just thrilled Las Palmas audiences with its heartbreakingly realistic recognition of the fact that lovers of unlike backgrounds should not marry, was wearing the beard of Moby Dick's Captain Ahab. This made him look like a Father Christmas Junior Grade, and though no bag of gifts hung from his shoulder the adoring eyes of the British Colony were immediately turned on him. The English equivalent of bobby soxers thronged about him and blasted whatever dreams he had had of relaxing in the quiet atmosphere of an English tea party. After twenty minutes of it he escaped in a taxi. The crowd turned back to the tree but Father Christmas Senior Grade had vanished like the down of a thistle.

Our third Christmas, coming at the end of a rainbow of dances, *meriendas* and beach parties, was the pot of gold. How

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much more natural to *climax* the season with gifts! Being less preoccupied with material tokens of esteem, Canarios seldom if ever exchange gifts outside the family or with business associates. Greeting cards, if they are sent at all, are restricted to a handful of relatives and friends temporarily absent from the home circle. These cards picture biblical scenes in black and white or muted colors, and are sometimes displayed beside the creche. Ours, at Villa La Solana, covered mantel and piano top and hung from swooping streamers from doorways and picture frames.

"Who *are* all these people?" asked a wide-eyed Tole one day.

To answer properly would be to tell our life histories so we shrugged off the question with a "just friends." But we couldn't shrug off an explanation for the variety of the greetings. They liked religious cards, cards showing a family photo or a family's chronicle of the year. One, presenting a family's milestones in a miniature *Life* magazine was passed from hand to hand and stirred up a lot of talk. But the many cards with sprigs of holly or a tree or a house or a landscape puzzled them. What was the significance? What connection did such things have with the spirit of Christmas?

On the afternoon of Three Kings' Day the kids were playing happily in the arbor with their few simple toys when in drove the Condes. A warwhoop came out of the car and Tole and Manolo's six-and seven-year-old boys jumped out in full cowboy regalia—from hat to spurs to a pearl-handled sixshooter on each hip.

It didn't take a mind-reader to guess what was going round in the heads of our young Hopalongs. Shirts and hats and lariats and holsters and an arsenal of firearms lay in the ghost town of our Haddonfield attic. But without a word about it the kids

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grabbed sticks for guns, cactus leaves for belts, bottle caps for badges and Andres' cistern rope for a lariat and led the young Condes a merry chase.

"Very un-Canario," said Manolo with a grin, "but Tole's wanted all her life to be a cowgirl, so you see—?"

No one would have mistaken Tole for a cowgirl at the Yacht Club's New Year's ball. She and several hundred of Las Palmas' leading ladies in custom-made formal gowns were an eyeful of smartness and beauty. Their outstanding characteristic was individualism—in hairdo, gown design, color, pattern, make-up (if any) and a sympathetic, unforced personality that was one's own. There was no norm, no sense of timely fashion. Nor was there one bit of excessive drinking—even though the party ran to 6:30 A.M.

Watching the dancers from Manolo's table was an exhilarating experience. To no one in particular, I mumbled the question: "Just what makes these women so attractive?"

A man whose name I have conveniently forgotten leaned across the table, looked me straight in the eye, and said: It's because they are well filled out—not skinny like your American women."

"Which American women are you talking about?" I asked. "I know some who wouldn't blow away in a hurricane."

"You know which ones I mean," he said, "the young ones—the ones who are going to college, getting married, having children. *That's* when the weight does them the most good, not later."

At that moment there were no women at the table so I searched the faces of the other men for an argument. There was no argument.

Tole was certainly close to a Canario ideal. While whirling

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about the Yacht Club floor with her, I could feel—as what man can't—the eyes of the multitude upon my partner. When Canarios want to look, they look. No embarrassed averting of eyes when caught at it. Looks of pure, unmistakable interest and/or admiration. These sometimes unnerved Katie. But not Canario women. Without the faintest hint of encouragement to the viewer they ate it up. At the height of this Walter Mitty moment I whirled about to come face-to-face with—of all people—our landlord, more distinguished-looking than ever in a dinner jacket.

“*Caramba!*” I croaked to Tole, “there’s the landlord and we haven’t paid this month’s rent.”

“Just *this* month’s?” asked Tole. “He hasn’t given it a thought.”

He bowed slightly and smiled broadly across the sea of heads. Beside him was his smartly gowned *señora*, her complexion sparkling in the dancing lights. She too smiled a warm welcome, temporarily washing from my mind a confused montage of water pipes, rusty braces, sagging springs and kerosene lamps. The rent had been due on Christmas Eve and here it was New Year’s Eve. When our original supply of Spanish money had neared exhaustion, I had written our bank for more. Word arrived saying it had been sent, but no money. Now we were down to loose change.

“Know anyone who’d like to buy a nice little refrigerator?” I asked Tole. “Or an almost-new Leica camera?”

“Don’t worry about it!” she laughed. “People are in no hurry for their money.”

She was dead right. I’d already had one startling experience, doing my best to pay the car insurance. The insurance agent had been dodging me and refusing to accept payment for three months. It had been one excuse after another. First he didn’t

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know the exact amount. When the quote arrived from Madrid he didn't have the policy. Then policy but no invoice. When he finally handed me the invoice—through the windows of our cars stopped double on the Angostura road—he wouldn't touch the money I waved in his face. "Stop and see me in my office someday when you're in Las Palmas," he said, edging his car forward.

"But it's been three months," I said, "I'd like to get this over with!"

"Relax," he said, "you're insured and you can pay me anytime." Seeing that he was blocking the road for an approaching car he waved and began to drive off. I threw the money through his open window and pulled away. This, I realized later, was a clumsy thing to do. The man was not only expressing his trust, he was indicating that he'd prefer to complete the transaction when my wife was not present and he was paying me the compliment of wanting to see me again.

Several days after the New Year's party, Manolo cornered me in his study. "Dick," he said, "I'm a little short of cash right now, what with Christmas just over, new seed for winter planting and no crop receipts. But I'd be glad to share with you my pay from the Marines. I don't want you to have to sell your Leica or refrigerator. You wouldn't get much for them anyway. This is the season when almost everyone is short of money."

I assured him, with thanks, that we could make out all right, but some days afterward the rumor that we were broke reached Arturo, too, and he confronted me checkbook in hand. "What do you need, Dick," he asked calmly, "five thousand. . . . ten thousand?" He searched my face with his hound-dog eyes.

No one had asked payment for anything. But in addition to the rent we owed five hundred to the little green store, two

*Self-styled Guanches in  
the ancient caves—an  
explorer's dream.*



*Karen entertains some  
Canario boys with wild  
west cowboys and  
Indians.*





*The children in the Guanche  
rock house they built in the dry  
river bed below the villa.*



*Fela arrives with the morning  
groceries.*



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hundred to the gasoline man and other odd sums all over town. I took three thousand. Arturo looked grateful. "In this family," he said, "we look after each other."

The car opened every nook of the island to our band of explorers. We took trips everywhere, and the farther we traveled from the capitol the more Katie's driving stirred up the populace.

"Look, look," screamed a woman nearly dropping a huge load off her head, "a woman driving a car!" This was in Agaete, a prosperous village in the subtropical valley of Berrazales. Heads popped from windows, children darted from doorways, men stepped out of a coffee shop. Eyes turned from the mistress of this powerful steel slave to the man sitting beside her. What kind of man was this?

For the American motorist frustrated by stop lights, bumper-to-bumper bridge traffic, no parking signs and 35-mile-an-hour zones on four-lane highways, Grand Canary is a paradise. There are no stop lights. Excellent traffic policemen on a few principal intersections do the job in a more versatile way, smiling and saluting to you as you pass. With so few cars and so many roads, traffic congestion is virtually unknown. You can park anywhere except in a too-narrow street or in a city bus stop. With so little competition, chances are fifty to one you'll be able to park—without backing and filling—directly in front of the store or office or house you want to visit. There are no hitchhikers. Pedestrians expect to walk and often refuse an offer to ride. There are no speed zones—winding and hilly roads and bananafied pedestrians take care of that. Everyone drives at moderate speeds without being told and honks at every turn. Police stopped us twice for not honking our horn on country curves. No one was coming from the other direction but it was

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an offense nonetheless. Otherwise the law is left to the discretion of the driver. There are virtually no warning signs for curves or hills or schools or side roads, no center lines telling you where to drive or when to pass. You are expected to expect anything, and the driver emerging from a side road on your right has the right-of-way. Pedestrians and animals have just as much right to the roads as you have.

The valley of Berrazales is a sample of the continent of contrasts one finds on the thirty-by forty-mile island of Grand Canary. From the hot medicinal springs bubbling from towering peaks at the head of the valley, to the tiny fishing village of Las Nieves at the foot, stretches a gigantic trough of exuberant vegetation. Coffee plants, papaw trees, mangos, avocados, nisperos and sugar cane thrive side-by-side with the fruits and vegetables and flowers of cooler climates. From almost any point in the valley you can see across a stretch of blue Atlantic to the Isle of Tenerife's peak of Teide which thrusts its snow-topped cone twelve thousand feet into the clouds.

Above the Berrazales, and toward the south, is the pine forest of Tamadaba. Behind the pines, and in the heart land of the island is a formidable crater of black volcanic ash. In America such an accessible wonder would likely be surrounded by lookout platforms, coin telescopes, postcard peddlers and hot dog stands. But there it stands, silent and alone and you stumble on it.

Even more interesting, particularly for the kids, were the nearby cave dwellings of Artenara. Here, by choice, the troglodites live in comparative luxury. One housewife we visited had raised eleven children in a five-room cave. The cave was dug by her father and keeps precisely the same agreeable temperature the year around with neither heating nor air conditioning nor payment of rent. At this 4300-foot altitude the out-

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side temperature climbed and plunged more vigorously than in the 1500-foot Angostura. This cave family flattened these extremes by opening the door when the outside air was hot, closing it when it was not. Mother Earth took care of the rest. She even kept moisture under control, said our hostess, thanks to the porosity of volcanic rock. The interior of the cave was clean, whitewashed and adequately furnished with dressers, rockers, kitchenware and better beds than ours. Her husband and several of the boys cared for sheep, goats, burros and a few acres of land. Another boy was studying on the Peninsula on government scholarship, the privilege of every high-ranking student, regardless of ability to pay. (Saro, for instance, had won a scholarship for several years at our landlord's school.) One of the daughters was married to a man in faraway Las Palmas. Another was married to a tanned and husky sheepherder who had moved into the cave and helped add a grandchild to the roster.

Barry returned from talking to a boy his age who was tethering a horse on the mountainside. "Gee Dad," he said "living here would be fun."

Our trips took us on to the parched and petrified mile-high center of the island. To the green banana carpets of the north coast bordered in white by the sea froth blown in by the trade winds. To the protected south, with the African look of its oases and its people. To our own "hidden beach" in the wild and uninhabited southwest, where we played Canario football on the smooth, hard sand; swam in the gentle surf; played pirates and *guanches* around watery caves into which Craig somehow injected the Yewnited States Cavalry who could solve anything.

In late January we extended our wanderings to other islands in the Canary archipelago. An English friend suggested we sail

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first to Tenerife, as nonpaying guests of the Norwegian fruit line he represented. We toured there for two weeks then took the car on to the Isle of La Palma, the greenest of the group. On the going and return overnight voyages aboard an ancient Spanish cargo-passenger ship, Katie and Karen shared a first-class cabin, Craig and I joined two strange men in second-class and Barry and Brian took deck passage—sleeping in our little station wagon which was lashed outside to the port rail.

The people of Tenerife are less bananafied and more European than the Grand Canarios. We stayed in their jewellike port and capital of Santa Cruz, visiting Arturo's sister Adela and brother George before moving on to the little-known fishing village of Medano and the well-known, tourist-packed Puerto de la Cruz. In winter this quiet little town suns and shelters visitors from all over Europe. It lacks a sandy beach, as do all other accessible resorts on Tenerife, but the Hotel Martianez pool is a good substitute. Here the kids' stamp-collecting hobby paid off in a big way. They were able to collect them direct from the citizens of each of eight countries and pick up a little folklore and national character-reading on the side.

By this time they were speaking Spanish and English interchangeably, even serving as interpreters between hotel personnel and guests, and were hungry for more. They loved the special sounds of French and began to pick up some words through their similarity to Spanish. They were fascinated, too, by the pithy gutturals of German and the up-down-up-down pitch of Norwegian.

Norwegian—ah yes, that recalls Katie's fight for the honor and reputation of American women. One day while alone at the pool I got talking to a tall, smart-looking brunette from Norway. She was unmarried, well-traveled and spoke effortlessly in four languages.

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"Your wife," she said, "shows more originality than most American women."

"Thank you," I said, blithely assuming that she thought that some credit for this was due me, which it was not.

"You can spot American women anywhere," she continued. "They look so much alike that you'd think they all go to the same hairdresser and buy their clothes from the same factory. They even walk alike and eat alike and have the same sort of expression on their faces. They read the same books, buy the same gramophone records, talk in the same clichés and dress their children like other peoples' children. When they come to Europe they flock to see the same sights, stay at the same hotels, eat at the same restaurants and make the same remarks that Americans have been making for years. Furthermore, they—"

"Whoa," I said, "I think my wife would like to hear this compliment from you direct. She'll be back at the pool this afternoon."

"All right," she agreed, "I'm very interested in an explanation. With all the money and materials and time-saving things they have, one would think. . .well, they'd do what was most advantageous and most interesting for them—not what everyone else does!"

Later I barely hinted the subject and Katie exploded. "I'm tired of hearing criticism of American women! We don't look alike at all. You can buy a thousand different suits and dresses and accessories. Bests' things look different from Wanamakers, and there are all those different makers trying to outdo each other, and hats—look at hats—these women don't even wear them. And books, and records—how about the collectors? And houses—look at all the cute things people we know have done with their houses and their furnishing and their yards. And this girl—what's so original about her—that blue suit? Why I—"

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"She wasn't talking about *you*," I said, "just the other sixty million."

"Well, anyway, it's ridiculous. I suppose she thinks a fifty-year-old woman looks and acts like a twenty-year-old girl?"

"No. I think she means twenties like other twenties and fifties like other fifties."

"I'll talk to her," she said with finality. "I've heard enough of this nonsense!"

Unfortunately for this narrative I was not present to report the exchanges that followed. I can only say that nobody convinced anybody of anything. But four months later, in the tourist meccas of peninsular Spain and Portugal, we had to admit to each other that there was something in what Miss Norway said. After a year's isolation from all but a dozen or so Americans we quickly noticed the changes that had come over cars and clothes and conversation. After we'd seen one of the new crop the others were not hard to pick out. More alike than Canarios? Yes. More alike than Norwegians? We haven't seen enough to know. Perhaps they all look like Miss Norway. And if so, is that bad?

One of the children's most faithful companions on Tenerife was a wise and talented Englishman named Mr. Rudolph. He was the curator of a London medical museum, wore black-rimmed bifocals and had a red nose. The children had listened enraptured to his stories of science and wildlife some months before on the beach at Las Palmas. Then he disappeared. It was four-year old Craig whose sharp eyes first sorted Mr. Rudolph's familiar profile out of the multitude of profiles in the large, crowded Martianez Hotel dining room. It was one of those breathless moments when hardly a teaspoon was stirring.

"Hey," he shrieked, "there's our old guy friend Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer!"

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Just about every guest in the room understood English. Forks paused in midair and necks craned to follow Craig's gaze to the recipient of this tribute. But did Mr. R. try to bury his nose in his water goblet? No, God love him, he arose with his best reindeer grin and crossed the room to greet his admirers. After that the atmosphere of the dining room was never the same. People began speaking to each other between tables. Even the German headwaiter's starched shirt front seemed to relax. All because of the unself-conscious affection between two boys born sixty years apart.

It was experiences like this that led Barry to make this comment on friendships made while traveling. "I wish now we wouldn't stop anywhere longer than one day," he said with a faint choke, "because when it's longer I get to like people so much it hurts to leave them."





*Part IV*

GETTING GOING

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## Part IV: GETTING GOING

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HOMECOMING from our inter-island junket gave us a more-than-ever feeling of belonging to Grand Canary. We found familiar figures on the breakwater. The kids called out familiar buildings in the port and peaks on the skyline. The stevedore who derricked our car off the ship squinted closely at my face in the twilight and said, "I've seen you around before. Don't pay me now. Stop in the office someday."

A few blocks' drive from the ship we heard a shout and up pulled a motorcycle bearing a uniformed Manolo and a side-saddle Tole. Smiling and patient, they listened while the six of us stumbled over one another's Spanish to brief our vacation story. How we climbed from the sea level to the eight-thousand-foot level on the peak of Teide *twice* in one day. (Very American, they said.) How at Medano we got stung by Portuguese men-o-war, fish that looked like innocent blobs of grape jelly. And, shrilled Craig excitedly, we'd seen a Tarzan movie where Tarzan and his mate and his boy and the black men all spoke Spanish!

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A party was planned and off we spun to the familiar greeting of our Angostura neighbors—a lilting “adios,” used for “hello” as well as “good-bye.” But sad news hung heavy over the little green store. Fela’s mother had died, her father had collapsed in grief, and the reins of the family household had passed to her, the twenty-two-year-old daughter. She had entered immediately into the three-year period in which one must wear black mourning, and before beau Antonio the barber had a chance to forget how she looked in bright cotton prints and a flower in her hair, she announced their engagement.

“I always knew she was a smart girl,” winked Katie, “if Antonio’s mind wasn’t made up before, it is now!”

Their seven year “understanding” had not been getting anywhere fast. When Fela had stayed with our children all night Christmas Eve, Antonio, who had not announced his intention to call on her, was furious upon finding her out and suspended his attentions for over a month. Day after day she bore her bandaged hurt about the house. The gay songs were gone from her lips, and in their place “*Pena, Penite, Pena*—pain in my heart.” Katie, who perhaps should have welcomed this promising hashmark on her cook’s longevity sleeve, instead mumbled and sputtered invective in the direction of Antonio’s shop.

“We’ll boycott his haircuts,” she barked, “even if we grow beards down our backs.” And back-beards we grew, for many weeks, until saved by the scissors of a proper barber on neutral Tenerife.

Katie replaced Fela with Pilar, whose mother had sixteen children—“eight here and eight in heaven.” Pilar was in her early twenties and a happier, more unruffled disposition we never expect to see. She promptly fell in love with Brian, and the two would carry on long conversations in the kitchen, their voices curtained from the world by the roar of the Primus. She

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had left school in the second grade, precisely the grade in which Brian was currently studying. There was also a little pixie in both of them, developing an affinity that made each the other's slave.

"Hey Pilar," yelled Brian from his bed, "where's that orange juice you promised?" He had a fever of unknown origin, loved being pampered and had called her for one thing or the other three times within the hour.

"G'wan, you're not sick," she called back, "you're just trying to kill me!" But she loved every moment with him, particularly when he looked at her impishly and talked the silly, pointless talk of children. He knew that she knew he was talking nonsense. That was the wonderful part of it. She didn't watch him critically from the earthy adult world. She was airborne with him, riding tandem a-broomstick through his land of fantasy.

Half-day school, we decided, was not enough for Brian and Barry. But to avoid a shuttle service between Las Palmas and the Angostura we'd have to find a school which served meals. Little Arturito Lenton and Albertito Cabré told glowing tales of a large all-boys' school run by the Jesuit fathers. It had 700 boys between the ages of five and seventeen. Katie went down to investigate: classrooms, number of pupils per teacher, play area, washrooms, dining room, kitchen. The fathers were friendly but astonished. Inspect their school? An irregular request. Did the Señora have some specific doubt?

Katie replied that she just wanted to look around before deciding where to send her children. The fathers exchanged glances and complied.

Barry entered the third grade and Brian the second. Each was the normal grade-for-age, a year ahead of the work of the previous fall. The curriculum was also well ahead of that in the equivalent grades in America. The boys quickly discovered

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that the work was hard. The school day extended from 9 A.M. to 7 P.M. Included in this ten-hour period were several recesses for outdoor recreation, a large midday dinner, siesta, *merienda* and chapel. More than seven hours of it was class time. Homework added another hour or so. Again, no one on the staff could speak English.

Brian, whose only work with numbers had been of the two-plus-two variety, was plunged wide-eyed into huge sums. "What's it mean to 'carry'," he asked on the second night, and before long we heard him chanting the Spanish multiplication tables, all the way to two hundred. As Barry was expected already to know these, he had to learn them from Brian at night so he could tackle third-grade division by day. Reading assignments were long. Notebooks began to fill. But it was not this that brought the complaints at nightfall.

"The kids gang up on us in the courtyard!" said Barry.

"They play football and never let us have the ball!" said Brian.

"They sneak up behind and push."

"They stand around and stare at us."

"They yell things at us so fast we can't tell what they're saying."

"The man who's s'posed to be in the courtyard leading the games is never there."

"So at recess we go play checkers."

"Another thing," said Brian, "they asked me a hundred times if I liked the Virgin Mary. When I said yes, they said they didn't believe me, so then I said no and they laughed and rolled their eyes like this and said 'who-o-o-ee!'"

"A boy in my class," said Barry, "asked me when I was going to be confirmed. I said never. He said why. I said because I'm a Protestant. He said what's that. I said it's another religion."

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He said well then why was I in the Jesuit school. I said that's what *I'd* like to know."

"You're there because we think you'll learn the most there," said Katie. "Have the Jesuit fathers or brothers ever asked you to become Catholics?"

"Never," said Barry, "They're swell. And the professor said I could recite the Ten Commandments and the Our Father as good as anybody in the class."

"Yeah," threw in Brian, "listen to me." With that he launched into a racy singsong monotone, reminiscent of the tobacco auctioneer in a Lucky Strike radio commercial.

"They don't teach you to say it like that, do they?" asked Katie.

"Maybe not 'zactly," said Brian, "but I like it that way."

After a pause Barry looked reproachfully at Brian. "Why did you laugh at me when the professor made me walk ten times around the courtyard for whispering in class?"

"I wasn't laughing at *that*," said Brian, as he began to chuckle all over again. "I was laughing at the way you waved your arms when you're making excuses."

"But that's the only way you can get these guys to understand!" Barry shot back angrily. "Just words isn't enough. You *gotta* talk with your hands!"

"You still had to walk ten times around the courtyard," concluded the Charles Addams child.

All was calm for a few days, then came the storm. Katie drove up to the school entrance one morning and without warning the boys suddenly refused to go in. Katie insisted. They walked slowly to the huge iron-strapped gates, listened to the jibberish of seven hundred voices within, then turned and ran back to the car. This time Katie led them in. "One more break like that," she said firmly, "and you'll get a spanking from your

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Dad." She listened falteringly to the din in the huge enclosed courtyard. How would she have felt if she'd been thrown to this pack at the age of seven or eight?

Two black-frocked brothers appeared and took the boys' hands. The boys broke away and again ran back to the car. "I'd rather have the worst spanking of my life," Brian called in English over his shoulder, "than go in there."

Katie apologized to the brothers. "They'll be back," she promised.

They were. After a backwarming talk with a hairbrush, and a long talk about authority and sportsmanship and good old guts, I took them back then joined Katie at the Leon's town house. Gregorio and Magdalena and Augustin and Otilia were there. They listened impassively to our story.

"Don't you think the school should provide more playground supervision?" I suggested.

A chill came over the group. "I think," said Gregorio staring at his folded hands, "that education is best left to the educators. And there certainly are no better educators than the Jesuits."

I felt like cutting out my tongue. "I didn't mean to criticize the staff of the school," I said. "Katie and I are accustomed to pass along observations and suggestions to the professors. We thought that in this case they may not be aware of the effect of playground confusion upon our children."

Gregorio, whose daughters were professionally tutored at home but whose three-year-old son was already learning to write at a parochial nursery school, closed the book with a snap. "I'm a physician, a husband and a father," he said. "I do not pretend to be an expert in repairing my house, replacing parts in my car, governing my country or running a school. When my boy steps from the door of this house my responsibility as a father ceases. He is then in the charge of the school and





*Barry with his Spanish professor.*



*Craig blows a call on the fish peddler's conch shell.*



*Pilar and Josefa de-louse  
Barry after his siege with  
measles.*



*An Angostura religious pro-  
cession. Little Green Store  
in left background.*

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remains in the charge of the school until he re-enters this house."

For a moment silence hung over the room and I got a sickening feeling that we were about to lose a very good friend. Four friends, in fact, for it was easy to see that the others shared Gregorio's views. Weeks passed before we met again. Twice we sadly watched Gregorio's new car, which he had bought "to reach patients in need and particularly to visit our good friends the Walters," pass by our drive without stopping. Finally, after several chance encounters and continuing good reports on the boys' new attitude and success at school, the warmth of friendship and respect came back to Gregorio's eyes. The professors, too, commented on the boys' rapid progress and gave them above average marks.

Late in the spring I received notice of a meeting of fathers of all the pupils. This is as close as they came to a PTA in Grand Canary and mothers are not invited. The purpose of the meeting was to hear the arguments of an educational authority supporting lots of homework as an adjunct to classroom work. Barry, by accident or design, failed to deliver the notice until the meeting was already in progress, so I couldn't attend. At a *merienda* after the football game that afternoon, however, I asked host Alberto Cabré and Arturo Lenton to fill me in on the meeting.

"Oh we didn't go," said Arturo. "I think lots of homework is a good thing—gives children a taste of the hard work of later life. Those meetings at school are for fathers who don't understand this."

"But," I asked, "don't any fathers object to some of the school's policies? Don't they ever make suggestions?"

"Suggestions? Who are they to make suggestions? They're lucky to have such a fine school handy."

Alberto concurred in this then changed the subject to football. We had just returned from a close game between Las

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Palmas and Madrid. The professional league covered all of Spain, with a season from September to May. Madrid, this year, held a high place in the standings and Las Palmas a low place, though our friends were quick to point out that some of the greatest stars on other teams were Canarios.

It has been said that football is Spain's Number One Sport. One of the stories making the rounds during our stay concerned Generalissimo Franco and a boy seeking his autograph. The boy got one signature from the great man, then went to the end of the line to get another.

"Haven't I signed yours before?" asked the Generalissimo.

"Yes," replied the boy meekly, "but with two of yours as a trade I can get one from the best footballer in all Spain!"

There was still more evidence. The football stadium in Las Palmas, where there was no bull fighting, was always full or near-full. The bull rings of peninsular Spain's Alicante and Tarragona, in a month where there was no football, were less than half-full. Ever since the death of the great Manolete, *aficionados* had been mourning the absence of really good bulls and bull fighters. By 1955, football looked like a good substitute. It had got its start from imported English coaches (current Spanish coaches are still called "Mister") around the turn of the century. It offered, in its European, or soccer form, much of the grace and artistry of a good bullfight. Brutality was transferred from bull to human—a more subjective target, after all. Anyone who gets pleasure from watching a blood-blinded bull take a sword thrust between his fifth and sixth vertebrae will be likely to enjoy seeing a right-wing-back get a swift kick in the groin or an elbow jab under the diaphragm. In the Madrid-Las Palmas game the spectator was treated to the sight of an unconscious or writhing form every two to three minutes. Now and then came a bonus—two players out at once—and we had

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the fun of speculating which of the two men was suffering more.

The crowd, of course, deplored and loudly protested an *awkward* foul. To be caught at it, by the umpire or by the eyes of the crowd, shows crumby technique—ranking with the badly aimed sword of the *torrero*, or with the banderillas that don't stay stuck in. Women gave good voice to their feeling, though there were relatively few in attendance. When the officials refused to allow a home-team goal, a lady spectator almost twisted Katie's arm off.

I once read somewhere an opinion that the Spanish are cruel. Don't you believe it. Did you ever hear of a Spaniard beating his wife or abandoning his children or murdering his neighbor? For them he has kindness and emotional security. The streak of cruelty that must lurk within all of us is spent in Spain upon the professional sufferer—the fatted bull, the well-paid footballer, the pea-brain fighting cock, the hapless fish who gasps for water on the parched sand and beats his body against the beach until his gills have bled their last.

Our host after the football game, Alberto Cabré, was a loyal Catalan who had left the economic glamor of Barcelona to marry Tere Leon, sister of Saro and Gregorio, and do business with the bananafied Canarios. An advertising man with intimate knowledge of operations in one of Spain's most successful agencies, he took a long chance and hung up his neon shingle in Las Palmas. Before long he was doing more business than anyone else in the islands and was employing sixty men. This was no small achievement. Canarios, for the most part, are not conditioned to advertising or display—either to use it or to respond to it. Except where the efforts of Alberto and his competitors have taken hold, storekeepers use no posters or display cards or special showcases inside their stores, and often not even

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a signboard on the outside to say it is a store. Miles and miles of shopping streets in the cities and villages of the Canaries are lined with absolutely anonymous stores, intermingled with homes and offices. From the street they look as alike as a block of row-houses. Pity the bewildered American housewife looking for a roll of toilet paper. First, how does she say it in Spanish? The dictionary ignores it. Attempts to describe it are ruled out. All she can do is find it and point to it. So what kind of store would she find it in—a grocery? How does she know when she comes to a grocery, when there are no signs or big plate glass windows? She pokes her head into a doorway. It leads to a stairway. She tries another. It's somebody's parlor. The third is a hardware store, and in the fourth some women are sewing. She asks them for a grocery. They start to give elaborate directions—but what does the Señora wish to buy? If it's fruit—No, paper napkins. Well, paper napkins can be bought in the stationery store across the street and up six doors. Oh, you still want the grocery. No fruit? Well, then. . . .

The still-bewildered housewife counts eight doorways to her left, and sure enough there's a grocery inside. But no luck. If it's there it's well-hidden, and with nothing but men in the shop, well, she'll try somewhere else. A few doors down the street her eye is caught by a bright green canary singing in a bamboo cage suspended from a doorway. It is a feed and seed store. She looks in, sees gin, cognac, anis and—hurrah!

The Canario economy, except for a handful of shops in the port and some new beauties along Las Palmas' main street, is designed for Canarios. It's always been their habit to buy certain things at certain stores, and other storekeepers do little to change this habit. Packages are often plain and yield neither clue to contents nor information on benefits to be expected. Many products are still cracker-barreled to the customers, or

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shaken out of mysterious gunnysacks in a back room. In short, the customer is expected to know what she wants and where to get it. As she has seen virtually no advertising in the newspapers and magazines, and on the radio she has heard nothing but noninformative, name-shouting commercials during the brief broadcasting day, she continues to buy the limited list of things she's always bought and ignores the new, the improved, the timesaver, the laborsaver; and the devices and possessions that bring more comfort and knowledge and beauty and joy to everyday life. Knowing this, the Canario storekeeper either refuses to stock the untried or unfamiliar at all, or else stocks so few that the customer faces little or no selection and is uninspired.

Present-day Canarios have inherited this attitude from 15th century Spain. King Philip then publicly classed "innovators" with insolvents, malcontents and lawless men. "Modern" was a horrid word. It distinguished contemporary stupidity and lack of education from the accepted good taste and correctness of one well-versed in the truths and theories of the ancients.

The more we talked with ad-man Alberto the more vividly we could appreciate his plight and the challenge to his ingenuity. Customer resistance or inaction kept many desirable things away from the islands so that they could not be advertised. Other things that *were* available were high priced because small shipments and lots of handling added to the cost. The shortage of advertising hurt both Alberto and the customer in another important way. It left room for irresponsibility on the part of the maker. There was usually no brand name to uphold, no reputation for quality to gear his manufacturing to, no service guarantee to live by. Without this protection, this assured right of redress, it's not surprising that the customer left well enough alone.

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Alberto's first move was to get signs on the stores and encourage window-display. To do this he had to go into the sign-making business, importing glass tubing and other materials and designing, building and servicing signs for individual merchants and business houses. I've never heard of an American advertising agency including this as one of its activities, but for Alberto it provides more than half of his income and his chief tube-bender is the highest-paid employee in the agency, earning \$21 a week and considerable prestige.

Alberto also decided he'd have to act as a manufacturer's representative for fabrics and gadgets made in his native Barcelona. He'd get the manufacturer to promise a certain amount of advertising money if a store's order could be counted on. Then he'd have to buy samples, take them to the stores and solicit orders on the basis of advertising. Awkward and inefficient as this is, it has brought some things into the Canario home that might otherwise have remained unknown and unappreciated.

Alberto's first conversation with me will long be merrily recalled by other guests at that football *merienda* as "the blind leading the blind." Here I was, an American stumbling along in shaky Spanish with a Canario accent, talking to Alberto who spoke Spanish with a choppy Catalanian accent and wore a hearing aid. To make it worse, I didn't know any technical advertising phraseology in Spanish: stumpers like copywriter, layout, typeset, survey, premium, billing, script and so on. We made contact somehow, and in later sessions of international shoptalk in his office we sometimes enjoyed the help of brother-in-law Manuel Ley, whose scholarly approach to both languages enabled him to focus on pin-point translations.

One of these sessions revolved about an American soft drink salesman who flew down from his Paris office just when the



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winter weather was getting unbearable up there. He approached Alberto with a multi-page market survey form and said, in effect, "Fill this out and we'll see if there's a market here for my beverage. If there is we'll find someone to build a bottling works and you can handle the advertising." This was an American approach and any American agency would have known exactly what to do. But Alberto was baffled. "Help, Dick!" he called, and I went over the survey form with him, paraphrasing questions like: "How many thousand dozen cases of our beverage could be sold in Grand Canary (a) now (b) after six months (c) after one year?" and "How many outlets are there, and what is the average sales volume in soft drinks per store?"

"Good Lord, Dick!" sobbed Alberto, throwing his hands aloft like a stick-up victim, "this information doesn't exist anywhere! Nobody—not even the government knows the number of stores on this island. Even if we *did* know, there would be no way of making sure that they do or *would* carry soft drinks. And they would never give me sales figures first because most of them really don't know, second because most of them pay no income tax and would think me a revenue sleuth!"

I could believe this. Once I had visited the tax bureau with a friend who was making a payment. The official told me that income tax percentage varied from 0 per cent to 22 per cent.

"What deductions are allowable?" I asked.

"Just wages and benefits paid to workers," he replied, "but of course no one pays tax on his entire income."

"How, then," I asked, "does he figure what to pay?"

"Well," said the official with a shrug, "he just picks a figure he thinks is fair and pays it."

"What is the meaning of 'fair'?"

"This is difficult to explain, Señor. Everyone knows that the

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tax percentages are ridiculously high. No one can be expected to pay the government one peseta of every five he earns! So most of the people pay little or *no* tax, on the theory that ordinary living takes all of their income. A man with larger earnings, especially one with bank accounts and farms, feels that he should pay a fair share toward the operation of the government. He first deducts wages he has paid to workers; then he considers help he remembers giving to others, taxes he remembers paying for other purposes and anything else he feels he has done for the good of society. He deducts a credit too for each dependent son (nothing for daughters, of which Eugenio had five.) He figures the proper tax on this reduced amount, and if it seems unfairly high he reduces it some more. Thus he reaches a fair tax."

"Suppose," I suggested, "you think this figure unfairly low?"

He smiled. "This rarely happens," he said, "but when it does we visit this man and reason with him. 'Look now,' we say, 'you own three houses and rent out two of them. You own also a large banana plantation and last year the export price of bananas was high—over five pesetas per kilo.' In this way we reach a figure which is more fair."

"Do you require him to show his books?"

"Books? Oh, for an individual books are so tedious. They are also easy to falsify. And what do they prove? A man-to-man conversation is much more satisfactory for both of us."

"Is this always satisfactory to Madrid?"

"No—Madrid always thinks they should get more money from our province. They can't believe that people down here have such small incomes. So they raise the rates to compensate. Then they replace our chief with a man who is supposed to know how to find more tax money. But the result is always about the same."

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Just then a uniformed military officer entered the tax office. The official called him over and introduced us. "Now here's a man," continued the official, "who must pay tax on his full salary."

"Yes," the officer agreed with a grim smile, "that's the trouble with working for the government."

"How is your farm producing?" asked the tax official.

"Very poorly, thank you," said the official. Both men rocked with laughter.

The American soft drink salesman left the island a sadder but wiser man. "How can we ever introduce a new product," he said to me as we sat in the patio of his hotel, "when the largest newspaper's circulation is only ten thousand on an island of 370,000 people, and when the cost of reaching that ten thousand is several times higher than in the U.S.? Radio—nobody knows how many radios there are, how many listeners there are, or when or to what they tune in. And posters—we could use posters on the outside of the city buses, but who knows how many people can read? This is beginning to get me—it's working in a vacuum."

"What might your price per bottle be?" I asked.

"In the cafes and bars? For everybody to make a profit it should be four pesetas—a dime."

"Would you," I asked, "pay a dime for a glass of soda pop, where for three cents at almost any bar you can get a *quart* of sparkly Firgas, or a two-ounce slug of cognac for a nickel?"

"Remind me not to answer that," he said. "I'm going back to Paris where people act like Americans."

Holy Week is enormously important in Spain. Grand Canary, though it cannot boast the elaborate pageants of Seville

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and others of world-wide renown, has its own way of re-enacting Christ's last week of torture and triumph. In Las Palmas there is a procession every day, and on Good Friday there are four—at 5 A.M., 11 A.M., 6 P.M. and 9 P.M. As the children had a two-week holiday from school we managed to see every procession except the one on Monday.

At Tuesday's, to take an example, Grand Canary's relaxed atmosphere cut heavily into the solemnity but not the emotional impact of the occasion. Swarms of kids milled around from block to block, climbing lampposts and sitting on statues. Men moved through the crowd selling balloons and sweets and unroasted peanuts. Women with armloads of groceries crossed the street in the midst of the procession, apparently uncowed by the tramp of the marchers or the police who tried to maintain a reasonable demarcation between watchers and marchers.

No matter how large the crowd it was always impossible to keep the presence of the Walter tribe a secret. Holy Tuesday was no exception. We had a fifty-yard-line location, directly across from the cathedral. With the kids in their sand-caked Hawaiian beach togs and hair like buttered spaghetti, and Katie towering a good four inches above Grand Canary's short-legged womenkind, the group at times attracted more attention than the main event. Because Americans were still so rare in these parts it was generally assumed that we were northern Europeans, whose families like ours of the twenties and thirties were expected to be smaller and more cleverly spaced. At the most solemn moment of the procession a woman squeezed through the crowd and asked the familiar question, "Are they *all* yours?" To Katie's return question, always anticipated, the woman replied, "I have five. Three here and two in heaven."

The procession was headed by a clump of youngsters of assorted shapes and sizes and attire. They ambled along casually,

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talking and looking about. One, a classmate of Barry's, smiled and waved to him from beneath a tapestry showing the sorrowing face of Jesus. From a balcony facing the cathedral the bishop blessed the group before they proceeded down a flight of steps and into the cathedral.

Next came a large square platform that supported a life-size image of Christ tied to the pillar and being scourged. The blood and agony were very real. Walking immediately beside the platform were women in mourning and immediately behind them a group of chattering, pushing boys. Beneath the platform, like big dual trailer wheels, were six pairs of feet in the canvas shoes of the country, shuffling along pretty much in unison. Guiding these unseeing feet was a man who walked in front and cane-tapped coded orders of speed and direction. He communicated with his bearers so successfully, in fact, that the platform descended the steps without a tremor.

The third group bore a tapestry with the face of Joseph, and the fourth a platform supporting his image. Katie felt this must be St. John but a former classmate of Karen's came up and said no, Joseph. The fifth was a group of boys wearing surplices and swinging canisters of incense. They were followed by a group of mourning women surrounding the most magnificent float of all—the image of the Virgin dressed in dark blue velvet trimmed in silver braid. The Virgin's features were so delicate and beautiful they could have been chiseled by a divine hand. The crowd was suddenly silent as she glided past, through the soft shadow of the cathedral. A shaft of sunlight streaked through the belfry and struck her starry crown. The woman next to us sucked in her breath. A man hoisted a child to shoulder level. "The light of God is upon her," he whispered, "He is with us." When later I was projecting a boxful of color slides to a *merienda* gathering at Gregorio's, a view of the Vir-

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gin's float flashed on the screen immediately after some hilarious beach scenes. The hubbub in the room ceased as abruptly as a snapped-off radio. There was a pause. Then Gregorio, in a voice I will remember until the end of my days, said, "*Ab-h-h-h-h, La Virgen!*" And in the glow of the many eyes that sparkled in the reflected light of the screen it became clear that I had photographed the Queen, the *true* Queen of Spain.

The platform of her float was rimmed with fragile hurricane candelabra. Katie, who only the day before had broken a kerosene lamp chimney, felt her heart stop in mid-beat as the float wavered ever so slightly and began its tremulous trip down the steps, but only *we* appeared surprised that it reached bottom safely. Soon afterward the Air Force band brought up the rear with long and throaty wails of funeral music. The watchers, despite all their moving and looking around, made the sign of the cross to each sacred image and seemed deeply moved in a way that could come only from within.

Even Brian, after wiggling and squatting and staring at unrelated objects, left the event with dark revenge in his heart. "I sure woulda beat up those guys scourging Jesus!" he said.

"Oh no you wouldn'tve," corrected Barry, "'cause you wouldn'tve known then whether he was full of baloney or not."

In the wake of Holy Week the padre of the little chapel over the Angostura's yellow store called for a mission. Attendance at mass had been dropping off, particularly among the men, and he believed that a processional show of strength along the full length of the Angostura road would stimulate the stay-aways.

Small boys would walk single-file on the left. Small girls on the right. Adults in the rear. Teen-age girls (the prettiest of

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them) would carry the tapestries and posters. Teen-age boys would set off fireworks (drawing shudders of alarm, giggles and coy looks from the teen-age girls). The padre would lead the prayers and singing.

We told Andres, Josefa and Pilar that they should take off early in time to dress for the procession. Andres said well, he had a lot of watering to do—he'd see. Josefa said fine, she wanted to walk with a cousin. Pilar grinned her pixie grin and cocked her head on the side. "But the Señorita is going to Las Palmas, no? I must watch the children."

"Not necessary at all," said Katie. "The Señor can watch them."

Pilar looked helplessly at me. I failed to rise to the bait. Her look almost said, "C'mon, be a good scout, get lost." Instead she turned back to Katie and said, "But I'm very ugly. Nobody would come to church because of me!"

Katie planted hands on hips and looked her squarely in the eye. "Pilar-r-r-r!"

Pilar threw up her hands and backed away. "All right, all right!" she wailed. With a heart-melting smile and one of her deft shrugs she disappeared into the kitchen. A moment later we heard her singing the sad-glad *Roque Nublo* with the same fine voice that was later to join in wondrous concert with the other singers of the valley.

Antonio's barber shop was directly under the chapel. . . . Half a dozen men sat about the shop watching me get a haircut and half-listening to the padre's resounding voice as he tongue-lashed his congregation. Final instructions on the mission.

"Another mission," said one without looking up.

"I'm going to watch it from here," said another. "If Antonio keeps his shop open." He looked up expectantly.

"It will be open," announced Antonio.

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I blinked through some falling hair and fixed an eye on the barber. "Why aren't you upstairs with Fela?" I teased.

"Because," he replied, "I would then be unable to cut your hair."

The men laughed gently. "I'll tell you why he's not upstairs," volunteered one, "he's heard it all before. He could give the sermon himself."

"Besides," added another, "it's not so loud down here."

My haircut finished, I paid Antonio the twelve cents and sat with Barry on the doorstep talking to the man of milk-watering fame until the services ended and footsteps thundered on the stair. The padre paused smiling before the doorway of the shop. He wore a handsome white lace surplice. The men rose to their feet and greeted him. I approached him, shook his hand and asked his permission to photograph the mission procession.

"We will be honored," he said "And this is your eldest son, yes?"

I introduced Barry. He promptly took the padre's hand and kissed it.

A few nights later we had a farewell party for one of the Island's two retired American couples. "I've decided I don't *want* to get bananafied," snapped the husband. "The other night in our living room a spider walked up the arm of my chair. I saw it but went on with my reading. Before long it was on my arm. I went on reading. Suddenly I threw down the book and realized what was happening to me. Now you know there's nothing dangerous about these spiders, but in America I would have jumped from my chair and smashed that same spider with a rolled-up magazine. Here, after a few months, I don't care. I DON'T WANT TO NOT CARE!"

Some time later I got talking "bananafication" with Arturo.



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His job was to meet, process and clear all of his agency's ships, whether they came by day or by night. As Las Palmas is an important refueling stop between Europe and Africa and South America, Arturo sometimes had to meet or clear two or three ships at the same time. Impatient captains with a schedule to meet added to his problems with dozens of demands they expected him to handle with a clap of his hands. Far from getting high blood pressure or turning his home into an armed camp, Arturo sailed through his seven-day week as serenely as if he was sweeping out the corners of a roundhouse.

"How do you do it?" I asked. "How do you put up with unreasonable demands on your time and patience?"

"Captains have a right to expect good service," he said, "they have lots of problems too. But when one gets unpleasant or tries to monopolize my time and the services of the port and my company I give him the slippery treatment."

"What's that?"

"I get all slippery inside, like the inside of a banana peel. I let him speak his piece—without interruption—but whatever he says slides right through me. I don't hear him. I don't absorb a thing."

"How does he react to that?"

"It makes him uneasy. He knows he's not getting through to me, but he can't prove it. He can't put his finger on anything. If I was simply holding back my temper he'd know how to get the best of me. But I have no temper to hold back. My mind is somewhere else—on the other job I should finish first."

"Do you finish it?"

"Certainly—and without pressure. Then I return to the unpleasant captain, give him a big smile and say 'Now what was it you wanted, Captain?' This unbends him completely. Either he realizes that he's been unfair or he knows he's licked. Next time he calls at Las Palmas we're good friends. Maybe he even

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brings a little gift from England, or wherever he's been. His way of saying, 'Sorry, old top!'"

Arturo was telling this story at a *merienda* given by Tere and Alberto Cabré for Tere's sister, Maria Luisa, who had just returned from a six-month stay in a town in Illinois. Her husband, Antonio, had been studying electronics there, returning with some vivid impressions of American hospitality.

"It's a great place to visit," he said, "but I wouldn't want to live there. The people were marvelous to us—couldn't do too much for us—in fact almost killed themselves, and us, with their strenuous kindness. The work itself was difficult enough, but what they call 'leisure time'—*caramba*—I don't see how they do it!"

He knew Americans who rushed home from work, dressed, shaved and drove like fury to a cocktail party on the other side of town, threw several very strong drinks into an empty stomach, wandered from group to group of acquaintances who were standing and talking shop, then drove home like fury to an early (7:30 P.M.) supper of fantastic, packaged, prepared foods, warmed up by their wives who had also been to the cocktail party. Then they either went out again to play bridge, or watched television or played some other card game with each other until bedtime. "And sitters," he groaned, "don't get me started on baby sitters. I can't tell you how glad we were to have left our children on Grand Canary."

Week-end America was another race against time. "One Saturday," he said, "we were asked to go with friends on a picnic. They were wonderful. They brought all the food. They had a fine big car. They brought a radio and sports equipment and all sorts of things. But do you know where they took us for the picnic? One-hundred-fifty miles away! We drove and drove through beautiful countryside, past many fine

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picnic spots. But they had a particular place in mind, and after an hour or two there we had to turn around and hurry back. The picnic lunch was delicious. There was no time for a siesta, of course. I got almost used to going without a siesta. My wife found that she could take hers in the morning—just by staying in bed. Our friends kept asking us if we were having a good time. They seemed truly interested in our welfare. They wanted us to feel that they were our friends. Americans are a most generous people. I am glad that they are at last our allies.”

His wife's stories were full of wonderment. Wives of neighbors and of her husband's associates took her shopping, or out to lunch, or out sightseeing or out to teas where children were not included. She wondered just when American women *did* see their children. How could they be on the go so much and still take care of them? She was glad she had left hers with Tere in Grand Canary, else she would never have been able to cope with them *plus* housework *plus* television *plus* all the gadding about. Even without the children the pace exhausted her and she found herself staying in bed until ten or eleven in the men!

morning. No *wonder* American women looked older than their

They lived in half of a two-family house, comfortably furnished and equipped with central heating. This was the first central heating she'd ever known. When chill winds blew across the Illinois plain she turned the cute little what's-its-name on the wall to its top marking of 85 and left it there all winter. The "85" meant nothing to her, as she knew only Centigrade temperatures. Whenever the house grew uncomfortably hot she simply opened a window or two. At night she closed the window and they slept in tropical splendor, with neither sheets nor blankets. There were two or three nights in February, she recalled, when a cold wave forced them to pull up a sheet. Other-

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wise it was wonderful—even warmer than Grand Canary. And she didn't want ever again to hear criticism of the climate of America's Middle West.

Her husband's travel and schooling expenses were paid by the government, and his naval officer's pay was doubled to cover American prices. But even this was not enough. When he was here alone during the first six months he lived frugally to save up for the remaining six months when she would be with him. But the beautiful shops and sparkling food markets were too tempting. Their friends' supercharged activities were too exciting and irresistible. They spent all he made and saved and more, even though she did all her own housework and they had no car.

They marveled at how all American naval officers could own cars. But that was only the beginning. One day the landlord drove them out to see a new house he was completing. All along the way they admired the ingenious controls which had been set up for this dense traffic. Then they arrived to find five big shiny new cars standing in the mud and debris of the excavation. She asked if the landlord had invited other guests to the house-viewing.

"No, just you," he said. "These cars all belong to the workers."

A New Jersey matron told us later that she had seen a startling example of Canario character when our friends had spent several nights as her house guests. On the morning they were to depart she heard the sound of furniture moving in the guest room. That's odd, she thought, why should they want to change the room arrangement at this late moment? She went to investigate. To her astonishment, she found Maria Luisa—clad in her officer-husband's pajamas—scrubbing the floor from wall to wall. Furniture had been moved to one end of the room. Beds

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had been stripped, mattresses folded over, bathroom scoured. No detail had been overlooked.

"Why on earth are you doing this!" exclaimed the hostess.

Maria Luisa rose to her feet with a smile. "When you are my guest in Grand Canary," she said, "I have servants to clean your room. But when I am your guest in America you yourself must clean my room. This is unfair to you, who have already done so much to bring us pleasure."

These fresh views of far-off America got us to thinking about the significance of our Canary Island Adventure. Were we enjoying all the benefits we'd expected? It seemed so, but to make sure we sat down and ticked them off with a pencil. Of the thirty-three looked-for advantages, twenty-three were realized in whole or in part. Seven failed to materialize. Three were questionable.

On the positive side, we'd succeeded in living for a third or a fourth of what we'd spent at home—even with a car. We cut down on family strain with a cook, a housemaid and a gardener. They became, in fact, an interwoven part of our activities and conversation. They depended on us, and we on them, with a strong bond of affection but with no strained attempt to abolish the natural and necessary discipline between employer and employee.

Katie's Five O'clock Shadow vanished because both she and the children were less tense and excitable. The big meal between one and three o'clock in the afternoon carried everyone through to the seven or eight o'clock *merienda* or supper without hunger pangs. The stimulating presupper cocktail gave way to a soothing Canario nightcap, or to nothing at all. And the later supper hour erased the urge to raid the refrigerator—even if there'd been one to raid.

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The *merienda* is relaxed, unpretentious living at its best. It is equally successful indoors or outdoors. It makes use of week nights, relieves the week-end social jam. It does not require someone to be "doing something" all the time. It encourages depth, more than breadth, in conversation. It rewards thought more than edgy cleverness. It promotes family-wide communion of interests without the ants and the antics of a picnic. It sets a grown-up behavior pattern for the young folks, more individualistic and compelling and lasting than one inspired by a comic-strip hero or the figment of a TVwriter's imagination. It makes a "gang" of the family, not of the neighborhood's potential triggermen.

Our Canary Island Adventure showed that fun can be manufactured at home, even by—and particularly by—children born into the world of programmed and packaged pleasure. Building a rock house in the dry river bed, a dam during the big rain and a guanche village complete with laws was the inspiration of young Americans. The Canarios merely followed. The saddest lack of the children of the Angostura is not money, not bicycles, not construction sets, not unpatched pants, not even uncrowded classrooms. It's the missing stimulation of books and magazines, Grade A movies, and good television shows. The upper class children of Las Palmas get a better break in this direction, but not all take advantage of it. Maybe—with their much stiffer schooling—they don't need to.

Our lack in America is perhaps the free time *between* stimuli, time to think and to savor. What price smatter? How wise is an electorate armed only with inklings?

One good story or show or experience goes a long way. Our kids, for instance, re-enacted with the raw materials of the Angostura a TV show they'd seen a year before. One visit to the guanche village of Guia gave rise to a burst of backyard build-

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ing and digging that went on for months. A set of plastic cowboys and Indians was the one notable exception in this era of homespun toys. But it was nothing without the guiding hands of kids already stimulated by TV.

Canario kids, on the other hand, manage to grow up amid less conflict. Less physical conflict and less emotional conflict. I don't know what to think about all the fisticuffs and gunplay American kids are born into. We're a belligerent lot, ready to fight anybody at the drop of an H. We want to oversimplify the issues, choose up sides, coin labels and have it out. A friend has said that this is really necessary for our survival. Another believes that Americans actually enjoy this national self-flagellation. Canarios, however, do battle with conversation and compromise. Children tease but seldom fight in the streets or playgrounds. Men do not beat their wives or fight in bars. Women do not shoot their husbands. The heros of fact and fiction are men of honor, not men of the quick buck, the fast fist or the speedy draw. Heroines are lovely women of chastity or mothers of fine children. In the Canario theatre of life, love is on the stage and hate is in the pit.

The Simple Life, we found, is only as simple as one is willing to make it. It's easiest to live this life, naturally, in a bananafied atmosphere—away from the familiar tensions and distractions which have so well conditioned American reflexes. It was probably not necessary to go without electricity, hot water, refrigeration and so on to discover this life's most basic values, but it helped. Every man-made contrivance—with the understanding, manipulation, safeguarding, repairing and replacing of it—taxes the nerves to relieve the muscles. There is dignity and exhilaration in muscular effort which is often corrupted or wiped out by the machine. Which do you prefer to be—a bird or a bomber pilot?

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We didn't participate in sports as much as we anticipated we would in Grand Canary. We came to realize that deliberate efforts to fit sport into an already crowded schedule make *work* out of it and can lead to more tension and unpleasantness. This is particularly true when it divides the family. Who has ever proved that one day a week or two weeks a year of sport will do anybody any good? A little every day, on the other hand, can bring sensational results. My waistline went back from 34 to 32 in our first two months on Grand Canary. Yet I ate everything in sight and did more sitting and lying around than some folks do in a lifetime. A little daily mountain climbing, pull-ups on our backyard horizontal bar, swimming and tumbling at the beach kept all six of us looking and *feeling* trim. Best of all, we did it together.

The Canarios showed us how to live useful lives without strain. They do not pretend to be something they aren't. They are morally honest—honest with themselves, their families, their friends. Their social and spiritual code is lived faithfully, though they'll break a man-made law whenever it seems expedient or convenient. Most of them live on or under their incomes and accept their lot with neither complaint nor regret. They will not go into debt to improve it. With them the Standard of Living is a personal condition, not a mass statistic. The upper class has a social conscience but one which does not eat as deeply into them as ours does into us.

Canarios generally are not preoccupied with perfection in the things they make or service they perform. They are industrious without being exacting. Their native lacework, for instance, is done with admirable skill and incredible patience. But it lacks that certain final touch, that touch of *chi-chi* that brings high prices and high praise on Rue de Rivoli or Rockefeller Plaza. Their art lacks spark, their photography is ruined in the



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laboratory, their literature takes no direction of its own and is virtually unknown outside the islands.

Even the Canario specialties like bananas and tomatoes have not been bred and crossed and recrossed to yield a product which will weigh more, taste better and better resist the hazards of shipping. And in Canario architecture, often a pleasing blend of natural woods and volcanic stone and white or pastel stucco, the carpentry and utility work are at best approximate.

An outstanding exception is the magnificent music of Nestor Alamo. But even it leans heavily on the receptiveness of the listener who must be in, or at least near the mood to get the most out of it. Blaring out of a juke box in a crowded Miami bar or spun by a disc jockey between cake-mix commercials it might well perish like the beauty of Shangri-La, or at least trip headlong over its own *aria doloroso*. Its beauty belongs in the Canaries, or at most in a movie about the Canaries.

With perfection and improvement de-emphasized in the list of life's goals the Canario is spared a heavy burden of daily decisions. He does his work and guides his family largely by tradition. He does not try to push his children "ahead" of him and perhaps as a result the children are proud, not ashamed of their parents. He does not question the teachings of his church. He does not have as much political liberty as Americans, but seems to like the government he has, feels free to criticize it and does not appear to want the responsibilities and disturbing upheavals which used to accompany elections at the top. It's all part, I suppose, of being bananafied, acting oneself, not crowding one's capacity and living a long and contented life.

"How would we fit into this life for keeps?" The question came from Katie and was directed to me. We were sitting Arab-fashion on the patio wall, sipping coffee in our white terry robes, just as on our first morning at Villa La Solana a year before.

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"I think we can do it," I said and spewed forth a barrelful of reasons to prolong our stay. After all, we'd been adopted by a wonderful Canario family. Our own family ties had become stronger than ever. We were healthy, and in such a fantastic year-round climate pretty sure to remain so. We still had money to live on. The kids had sorted out their most compatible friends, both in the valley and in Las Palmas. They had firmed up a solid grip on the language. Barry, for instance, was already doing his pleasure reading in Spanish—translations in book-length of *Robin Hood*, *The Last Days of Pompeii* and the works of Zane Grey, to name a few. Katie had friends everywhere, and had fallen in with vendors who would save her things in the back room, give her heavy weights and long dozens and big sprigs of choice chitchat. There were still some corners of the island which had escaped our inquest, and in Las Palmas we often ran into intriguing characters from Europe—royalty, movie stars, international businessmen, adventurers like the dashing young Briton who while on land defied convention in the tradition of T. E. Lawrence, and while at sea aboard one or another of his mysterious "yachts" smuggled humans and never-never cargo to three continents. There was so much more to learn, so much to write about, so much to photograph (I was taking pictures for the Spanish government, among other customers) and a year such as this had seemed to evaporate overnight. Some writing had been in concert with Manuel Ley, and just the day before this fateful session on the patio he had said, "Whatever you do, don't go away now. We're just getting so we understand each other."

Katie took a long slow sip of her coffee and faced me squarely. "You make it sound so logical, but you know, really, this isn't the place for us to spend the rest of our lives. After two or three years we'll know these islands like the backs of our hands. The

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strangeness of the language will be a thing of the past. Our new friends will get as comfortable as an old shoe. Our old friends in The States will forget us and we'll lose interest in what's going on there. What then? Don't you think we'll grow terribly provincial?"

"I think there's a lot of happiness out in the provinces."

"Maybe so," she agreed, "but we've seen Paree."

"Perhaps that's the answer," I said.

"What kind of answer?"

"Recharge our enthusiasm for Grand Canary each year by spending a month in Paree, or in Madrid or London or Rome."

She cocked her head at me. "Sort of defeats our concept of The Simple Life, doesn't it?"

"Only if we let such visits grow too long or important."

"And the children's schooling," she said, "are you satisfied that this mountain of memory work is the best preparation for their future?"

"For life in America, perhaps not. For Europe I'm sure it's reasonably good preparation. Remember, there's lots of feeling in America right now, a feeling that our kids aren't learning enough fundamentals."

"And you realize," she continued, "that to get to be permanent members of the Grand Canary community we should adopt this religion. It's too important a part in everybody's daily life. Without it we'd always be on the outside, like the English."

"I realize that."

"And how long do you think I want to go on talking about dressmakers, maids, labor pains, children, food and husbands?"

"What else do Haddonfield women talk about?"

"There you go!" she snorted. "Answering a question with a question. Just what you say I always do."

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"Well, I've heard you get into some lively conversations with menfolks."

"Yes, sure," she said, "I'm still new on the island. But the women wouldn't let me get away with that forever. Perhaps even the men wouldn't . . . remember when that fellow at the formal party blew the whistle on me?"

"Look," I said at last, "this is all small talk. What you're really trying to say is that you don't feel important enough here. Spain—particularly Grand Canary—is a patriarchy, run by and for the men. Women don't go to college, drive cars, run businesses or even vote. The U.S.A., on the other hand, is a matriarchy. It's run by male drones for the female queens who own most of the property, spend most of the money, set most of the fashions and make most of the decisions—just like this decision you're making for us right now."

Katie laughed merrily. "That's preposterous," she gasped, "I've never said any such thing!"

"No, but I've just said it and I'm glad!"

"But," she exploded, "it's not true. America's man's world. Every country is a man's world."

"Go on," I railed, "that's what women have been saying ever since Carrie Chapman Catt or Susan B. Anthony or whoever it was. And with every passing day it becomes a greater untruth than the day before!"

Katie chuckled some more and absent-mindedly brushed a convoy of ants off the wall with her bare foot. "Now look here," she began, growing more earnest, "let's talk about *you* for a while. How can the world get the best out of you while you're down here getting bananafied? And how satisfied are *you* going to be with things you do and have and use, when you know deep down inside that they're not as good as in the U.S.A.? You *know*

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how much you enjoy doing things real well, and you know that stiff competition helps make you feel that way."

Here I knew she was dead right. Once we get used to giving the best that's in us, and tasting the thrill of winning results, nothing else—nothing *less* will really do. America, right or wrong, is the wonderland of "bests." America, like it or not, wears the world's crown of thorns at mid-century. America made us what we are—even made this Canary Island Adventure possible—and deserves the best we can give in return.

"All right," I said, "back we go. But when housework . . ."

"I'm going to *love* housework," she broke in, "and shopping in big shiny supermarkets and sleeping on innerspring mattresses, and, well, we'll know too what things we can live happily without. We won't get trapped by trivia. We'll know how to relax. It'll be a better life than before."

"Hold it," I warned, "here comes Fela. Except for the mourning she's wearing this looks like where we came in."

Fela greeted us with a broad smile. She seemed less shy than in her days at Villa La Solana. ("After all," explained Katie later, "she's now the mistress of her own house and is responsible for two men.") She noticed the empty coffee cups sitting on the flat stones and smiled even more broadly. "I would like you to see my new kitchen," she said, "it's absolutely *magnifico*."

We went to see it. There was still no door, and the ceiling was still low for our tall frames, but there was a new concrete floor, a drain pipe running out through the wall, new rows of pot hooks and condiment shelves and a new stand for the water crock. Everything was well thought out. "Who did it?" I asked.

"Ah-h-h," she grinned impishly, "would the Señor believe it—I did it myself!"

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Fela and Antonio were married a month later but we were unable to attend. All four kids came down at the same time with measles. This was followed by head lice which Pilar and Josefa assured us "*always* follows measles," and still more events began to crowd in on us, one after the other. My company sent a reassuring but pointed letter, suggesting gently that I be on the 8:59 A.M. elevator on the morning after the end of our agreed-upon leave of absence. Then the real blitz—our landlord and landlady wandered in one Sunday afternoon and asked to have Villa LaSolana back. Their daughter was to be married and had always dreamed of honeymooning there.

"She'll miss Las Palmas electricity, won't she?" I asked in my most negative manner.

"Not necessarily," the landlord said with a twinkle in his gentle gray eyes, "the electricians will certainly arrive with the cables the very day you move out."

"She'll want new springs in the Bishop's bed," I suggested. "These sag halfway to the floor."

"Is that so?" murmured the landlady. "But we can tighten the old ones."

"You can try," I said, "but the mechanic has already tightened them as far as he could make them go. Besides, there's a place in Las Palmas, near the Jesuit school, where you can get new ones for just 150 pesetas."

The landlady began fingering a hole in a curtain. "I think," she hummed half to herself, "I'll have the carpenter put a bridal canopy over that bed." With that she wandered off to the bedroom with a new light in her eyes.

I turned back to the landlord. "Won't your daughter want hot running water?" I went on.

He looked surprised but not amazed. "Isn't the hot water system working yet?" he asked with his marvelous aplomb.

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"No matter. My daughter can have it heated on the Primus."

This was not to be our last experience with Spanish plumbing. The night we boarded a banana boat for Alicante on the Spanish peninsula, Katie clasped her hands in approximate ecstasy. "It's been a long, cold year," she piped pointedly, "now for a good hot shower!"

Hot showers? How could we miss? The ship was only three years old—an infant among the thousands of creaking workhorses of the sea. She had two nickel-plated shower hookups, impressive enough to pass for miniature oil refineries, on the six-cabin passenger deck. And being a steamship she should have enough hot water to scald a regiment.

Katie got first treat, but came out sputtering. "It started encouragingly tepid," she said, "then the more I fiddled and waited the colder it got. Maybe it's just too technical for a woman's mind. You try it."

So Man the Master went to work on the seven different valve handles, but results were even worse. The water started cold and ended cold. When the steward came along the next morning, I asked him to give it a go.

"It's simple," he said, "you just turn on the cold water valve and let it run."

"Look," I countered, "I've lived in Spanish territory long enough to try that one. You do it."

He swung open the cold water valve, put his hand into the stream and glanced over his shoulder with a look that said, "See?"

I felt it. "But it's barely warm!" I said "and the longer you wait the colder it gets."

"Naturally," he said. "The only warm part is what's been sitting in the pipe near the ship's engines. When that's run out, the rest is cold."

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"But what about this big steam-mixing whoozis?" I asked, pointing to the miniature refinery.

"Oh that," he shrugged and gave me one of those wonderful Spanish smiles. "That's never worked."

Actually we couldn't feel abused. Our four day and four night cruise on this bananafied banana carrier cost us only \$8 apiece—about the price of a Hudson River excursion. Yet we had individual cabins amidships, enjoyed the run of the ship and covered over a thousand miles on the high seas. For another twenty dollars our car was coddled in a tarpaulin and carried on deck. We brought our own food and threw a picnic three times a day in the lounge. Comestibles like cheese, canned clams, corned beef, hard-boiled eggs, gofio, cocoa, jam, butter, powdered milk and a precious can of instant coffee, tasted wonderful when mixed with liberal quantities of salt air. The steward boiled water for the coffee and sold us bread, bananas and oranges out of the hold. No waiters were there to hover, to frown or snub. No fixed menu and meal hours. No one to worry about a few spilled crumbs and orange peels. No wincing at vocal overtones or thundering feet.

We found this bargain boat on Wednesday of our last week in Grand Canary, and sailed on Saturday. The Las Palmas agent greeted news of our four children with wide eyes.

"*Caramba!*" he said. "This will cost you a fortune." "Unless, that is. . .how old are they?"

"Eight, seven, six and four," I said.

"Easy," he said, "we'll call the youngest three and the next four, then they pay no fare. The two eldest will pay half a fare each."

"Thanks, but it won't work," I said. "The four-year-old will look as big as the seven-year-old." For proof I pulled out a recent photo of the family.



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"Then," he said, undaunted, "we'll shrink the other two too. We'll call the seven-year-old a five-year-old, and the eight-year-old a seven-year-old. Then they're in proportion and if anybody asks, you say they eat like the devil. American milk made them tall and Canary gofio made them husky."

Having got completely around the world at the age of eighteen without paying a fare, my inclination was to let the man win the argument. Katie, however, waded in with torch held high. "I'll not go on your ship and have to lie about the children's ages!" said she. "Please just make out the tickets the way they should be."

The agent grinned in agreement and asked me to pick up the tickets on a later visit. When I did I saw that he'd charged only one fare for four kids.

"I thought. . ." I began.

"Look," he said, "my company lives on bananas, not blood. I can't bear to see you pay all that money. A man shouldn't be penalized for having so many children and such fine-looking ones at that. It would kill me. Here—take these tickets, give me the pesetas and have a good trip."

It was a nice gift for our tenth wedding anniversary. That night I took the mother of these four children to a prearranged French-German repast at a restaurant up-country from Santa Brigida. In our calendar-less life on Grand Canary, both of us had let our French anniversary pass unnoticed, so for the German one we combined nationalities with champagne, châteaubriand and Salade de Maurice Chevalier to recall the glories of France; chicken soup, hashed brown potatoes and a monstrous pudding to hold the fort for Germany.

Katie and I were the only guests and the German cook-proprietor gave us faithful attention. He was known around the island as "the man with the iron hand." His own right arm had

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been shot away by American troops in the war but he used his metal replacement with smooth dexterity. He was not a bit reluctant to reveal that he had been captured and imprisoned for a year by our army, then tried as a war criminal by the French and imprisoned two years for his activities as an interpreter for the Nazis in Paris. Yet now, less than seven years after his release—he was pouring all his accumulated gastronomical art into an effort to help us celebrate our victory wedding in his humiliated homeland. What keeps such a man, we wondered as we watched him in the garden ripping up a row of lettuce with his iron hand, from stirring a little belladonna into the chicken broth? How thick and yet how thin is the skin of nationality. How porous the membrane between civilization and barbarism, while the osmotic pressures of war impose the one upon the other and the other upon the one, in unpredictably variable degrees. The Rhineland factory which made the tanks to chase us back from Kasserine had now made the car which carried my family safely to all the delightful corners of Spain. The lens grinders of Wetzlar who built the bombsights and gunsights for the hated Bedcheck Charlies had now built the camera which captured and preserved forever some of the significant moments of our Canary Adventure.

And at the very moment I write these lines, at a beachside resort on the Mediterranean coast of Spain, I can see German men and women of my own age playing in the surf with our American children. They have even loaned us their rubber life rafts for the day. Just this morning a French visitor played for them on the pension's antiquated piano. And with each of these once bitter belligerents our kids speak the tongue of a neutral—Spanish.

The second of our four remaining nights on Grand Canary we planned to stock up on sleep. We had just begun to pack.

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The kids had raised a howl when we said "Nix" on filling suitcases with coverless Spanish comic books, empty evaporated milk cans, seashells, bottle caps, candy wrappers, string, favorite shorts minus their backsides and numerous reminiscent specimens of lava and driftwood. The day had been full of exhortation and compromise, so we greeted Morpheus with a welcome embrace. But it was a brief one. Katie woke me at eleven with the familiar, "Listen, I hear a noise!" It was for real. I heard it twice—a soft shuffling sound. Not quite like the tramp of Andres' canvas shoes—on his late rounds. Something else, weird and breathless. I leaned out the second-floor window that opened upon the blank-blackness of the courtyard and with that silly feeling you get when calling into the dark I blurted in my most ghostly Spanish, "Who's there?" The night blotted up my voice and returned nothing, until suddenly, as if it were an arm's length in front of me—came the music of Canario strings and a chorus of voices singing the favorite of serenaders:

*Asomate a la ventana*

*Ay-Ay-Ay*

*Paloma del alma mia*

*Que ya la aurora temprana*

*Nos viene anunciando el día . . .*

(Peep out your window

*Ay-Ay-Ay*

Pigeon of my soul

Already the early dawn

Comes announcing the day to us . . . )

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After it came *Roque Nublo*, *Adios Canarias*, and suddenly the explosion of a flare, held high by a grinning Arturo. Beside him were Saro, Gregorio, Magdalena, Tole, Pino, Manuel, Emilio and Doña Maria Leon. In the dazzling flare light, they launched into the Canario dances, whirling in a huge undulant ring around our fountain. The sad-glad penchant of their singing resounded up the mountainside, then all was still and the clear, strong voice of Pino sallied alone into the night. We could make out three stringed instruments—a guitar, a *timple* and a *laul*—and their hypnotic strains laced the dancers into expressions of incredible unity and emotion.

The seventh or eighth piece was a potpourri of original verse contributed impromptu by each of the dancers in turn. Some complimented us, some berated us for leaving, some were funny, some gay. All had a ring of sincerity that tore at our insides. As a new flare broke out I could see two rivers of tears coursing down Katie's cheeks as she shouted "bravo" out into the night. It was all so beautiful, so unreal, so impossible. The gang had driven out from Las Palmas, left the cars at the foot of our drive, sent Pilar's brother up the hill to divert Eugenio's dogs, then sneaked up through the pinewoods in total darkness. All the men wore bow ties, a subtle compliment to the host. Someone had suggested to Doña Maria that the expedition would tire her but she said, "Nonsense"—she was going to miss the Americans just as much as they. Threescore years and ten children would never stand in her way!

When they'd exhausted themselves and the flares on a rousing chorus of *Ay Teror!* we lit a few lanterns and found the kids knuckling their eyes in wonderment, a jumble of silhouettes against a downstairs window. They made the rounds for the last time, going naturally from one to the other with a good night kiss, not understanding why they were held a little

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more tightly than usual. Then Gregorio and Saro helped tuck them back in. "It was like a movie!" Karen said later.

Then we all snacked and sang and danced and played until it seemed the little living room could take no more. We torch-lighted them down the drive, with guitar, *timple*, *laul* and harmonica going in concert. And as they drove off down the valley in a hail of adios, Katie and I stared at each other in silence for a long time. Leaving these people was already beginning to hurt.

The third night we'd known about beforehand. It was the official farewell—a very special *Aperitivo Canario* at the Leys. The gang of the night before was there, plus Tere and Alberto and Cloty Ley, Manuel's mother. The food was superb, served like a smorgasbord. There were fritters, fishballs, meat chunks, whole baby potatoes we dunked into firey *el mojo* sauce "with the jackets on so they wouldn't get burned," pickled fish, pasta and on and on. On the sideboard was the traditional lubricant of rum and honey. For atmosphere, Manuel dressed as a country Canario with a sign that proclaimed him lovable old Andres. Gregorio and I talked far into the morning, shutting our eyes to the inevitable hour of reckoning. Katie and Magdalena yanked us off our settee but we continued the conversation on the floor.

"Remember," he said, "our first conversation on the Golden Bus?"

"Poor you," I said, "I didn't know enough Spanish words to make a single complete sentence."

"There must be some way," he said, "to stretch this night. When we leave here, let's go to our house."

But we all knew it wouldn't work.

On Saturday, the last day, Arturo came up to drive Katie and kids and bags to the ship. All afternoon, Angostura folks came by to say "adios." At one time four kids actually stood in line to shake hands with ours—a scene entirely too orderly, too

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adult, too unashamed, too unself-conscious to happen in the U.S.

Pilar and Josefa took hours to kill, pick and stew the chicken sent as a going-away gift by the family at the little green store. They couldn't get organized on packing or cleaning. They just embraced the kids, one after the other, calling plaintively, "Oh child, my little child!" When Barry and Brian were ready to leave with me and the trunks, Josefa's handsome face grew gargoylean with grief, her twisted features glistening with tears. Pilar, the serene and happy one, was no longer the singing voice behind the broom or the gay laugh from the kitchen. She was squeezing her favorite Brian so hard her knuckles were white and the tears ran freely onto his soft blonde hair. Even Andres was crying as he brushed aside his final pay and hugged me and I found myself squeezing him as a son his father and the aroma of his sweat-soaked body stayed with me through the evening like a decoration.

Katie and Arturo checked all windows and doors, practically rebuilt one of the locks that had never locked, counted the "silver" and handed a huge kettle of garbage to Andres.

"With this haul your hens should lay all double-yokes," she said.

Andres clasped both her hands in his tree-root fingers and squeezed until her rings crunched nearly to the bone.

Arturo coasted the old Opel a few feet to start it but found Pilar and Josefa still clinging through the window to Karen and Craig. They kissed Katie about ten times on both cheeks and by this time she, too, had come unstrung.

"Forgive me, please, Arturo," she said, blowing her nose and readjusting her hat, "I've left a lot of people and a lot of places but never cried like this, nor had anyone cry over me."

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Without looking at her, Arturo answered quietly, "Well, where we're going now you'll see some more." He was silent a moment before going on. "Sometimes I think it was bad luck when Dick pushed my car that day. If he hadn't, all this wouldn't have happened."

They rolled down the Angostura road and Katie found it hard to return the waves and calls from the village and cave folks, and to realize that no more would she see such happiness, such humble beauty in faces, such homespun artistry in even the placement of a patch on a pair of pants or a flower pot in a patio. They picked up Saro on the way through Las Palmas and she and Katie just looked at each other and tear ducts started flowing all over again. They joined us on the breakwater just as everyone else was arriving. Angel and Mena Lenton broke up a *merienda* to come. Even Manolo Conde made a flying trip from the Marines' amphibious maneuvers at Maspalomas.

I thanked him, my words falling over each other in the act, for his family's many kindnesses to us.

His reply was typically Manolo. "It's nothing," he said, "we're just friends, that's all."

Alberto "There'll always be an Ad Man" Cabré was delighted to hear that we planned to visit his native Catalonia on the Spanish peninsula. "You'll like the *Costa Brava*," he enthused, "I've brought along a book that describes every kilometer of the way. And Barcelona—say, it's big-time—just like America. Lots doing all the time, and the shops are full of things you never see down here."

Manuel Ley drew me aside with a preoccupied look. "Now that you won't be here to hold it against me," he said, "I'd like to say that I think the spirit and example of your family has

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done more to us than we have cared to admit. Your questions and observations have helped us to see ourselves better. When we have to explain ourselves to you we realize more clearly what we are and how we look."

"Then it's been accidental," I said. "I never asked you to explain yourselves."

"But we did, all the same. Your American way is so relentless and so right—*too* right in some ways—that one feels he must attack the wrongs of it to justify not adopting it. In doing this, he inevitably explains himself."

"More gin and Fargas?" I asked Tole as I approached her in a group on the breakwater.

"No—more Dick."

Gregorio was quiet, and as the gangplank was shipped he gave us a long, warm look that was a speech in itself, stopped to hoist Gregorito to his shoulders then directed his attention to the others on the breakwater.

The ship pulled away at dusk and the six of us gathered at the rail to sing *So Long, It's Been Good To Know You* as we had sung it to departing visitors so many times over the arbor wall at Villa La Solana. No sound came from the group on the breakwater until we reached midstream. Then, from the gathering darkness came a spate of flashing car lights. And for the last time all voices joined in one long "adios."

We sent the kids below to undress for bed, and mounted to the bridge to watch Grand Canary's familiar contours fade into the inky velvet of the sky and the sea. Upon re-entering the corridor by our cabins we could tell that the four young voyagers had not got to bed at all but were gathered in one cabin to hash over the turbulent day.

"Hey," Karen was saying, "did you see Mommie crying with Señora Lenton and Señora Leon?"



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"That's nothing," snorted Brian, "I saw Daddy and Doctor Leon crying too. I've *never* see *them* crying."

"All of 'em," said Karen, "looked like they been peeling onions."

"Yeh," said Barry, "onions of love."



